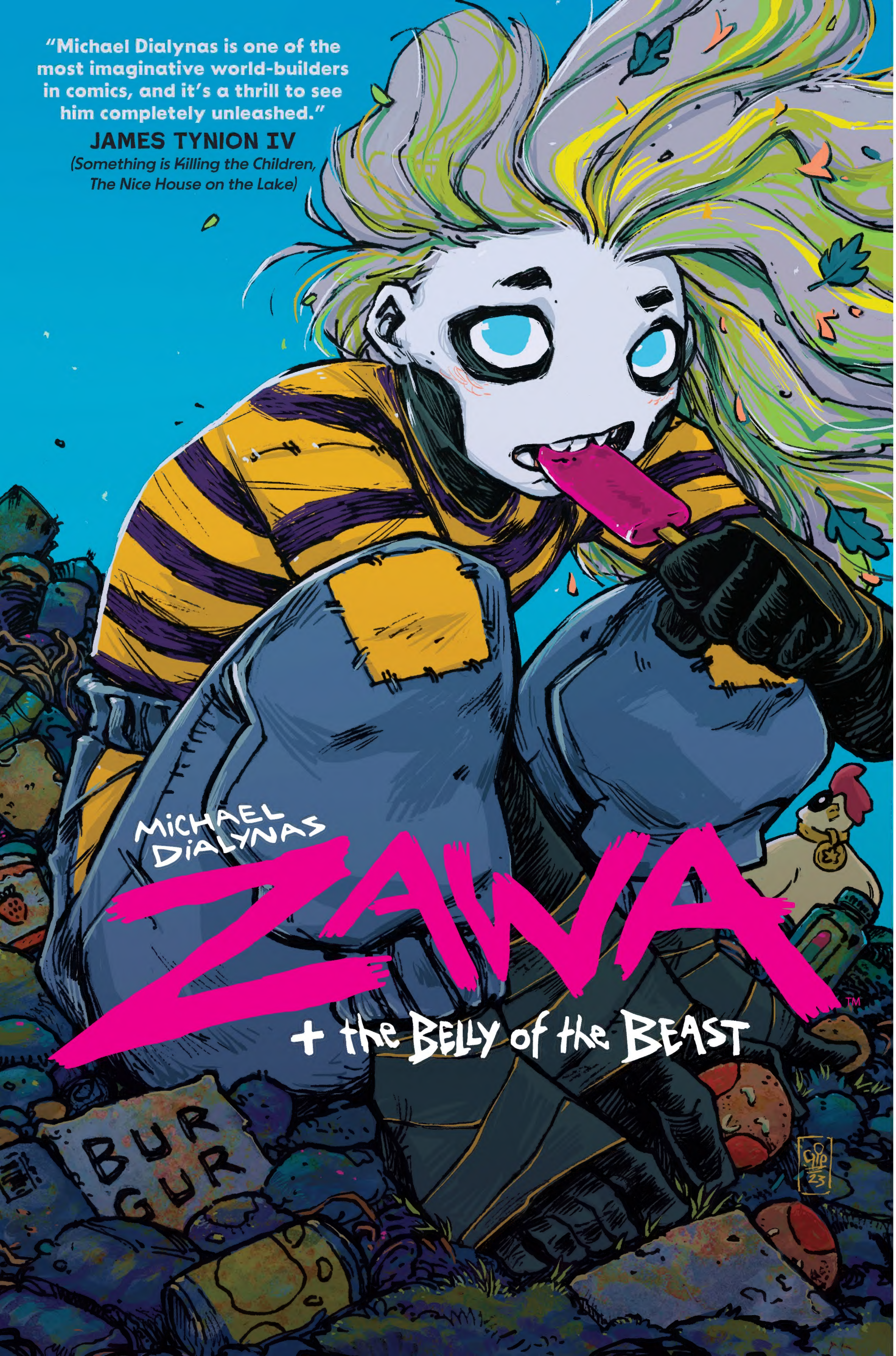

"Michael Dialynas is one of the most imaginative world-builders in comics, and it's a thrill to see him completely unleashed."
JAMES TYNION IV
(Something is Killing the Children, The Nice House on the Lake)
MICHAEL DIALYNAS
ZAWA
+ the BELLY of the BEAST
TM
BUR GUR

ZAWA
NOM! NOM
Belle + Spot!

DOOOM!

ZAWA™

+ the BELLY of the BEAST

Published by
BOOM! BOX™

ZAWA + THE BELLY OF THE BEAST, October 2024. Published by BOOM! Box, a division of Boom Entertainment, Inc. Zawa + the Belly of the Beast is ™ & © 2024 Michael Dialynas. Originally published in single magazine form as ZAWA + THE BELLY OF THE BEAST No. 1-5. ™ & © 2023, 2024 Michael Dialynas. All rights reserved. BOOM! Box™ and the BOOM! Box logo are trademarks of Boom Entertainment, Inc., registered in various countries and categories. All characters, events, and institutions depicted herein are fictional. Any similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, events, and/or institutions in this publication to actual names, characters, and persons, whether living or dead, events, and/or institutions is unintended and purely coincidental. BOOM! Box does not read or accept unsolicited submissions of ideas, stories, or artwork.

BOOM! Studios, 6920 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90038-3306.

Printed in China. First Printing.

ISBN: 978-1-63796-942-7,
eISBN: 978-1-63796-945-8

Ross Richie Chairman & Founder
Jen Harned CFO
Matt Gagnon Editor-in-Chief
Filip Sablik President, Publishing & Marketing
Stephen Christy President, Development
Adam Yoelin Senior Vice President, Film
Lance Kreiter Vice President, Licensing & Merchandising
Bryce Carlson Vice President, Editorial & Creative Strategy
Josh Hayes Vice President, Sales
Mette Norkjaer Vice President, Development
Ryan Matsunaga Director, Marketing
Stephanie Lazarski Director, Operations
Elyse Raimo Manager, Finance
Michelle Ankley Manager, Production Design
Cheryl Parker Manager, Human Resources
Rosalind Morehead Manager, Retail Sales
Jason Lee Manager, Accounting

ZAWA + THE BELLY OF THE BEAST
created by Michael Dialynas

Designer
MADISON GOYETTE

Assistant Editor
MAYA BOLLINGER

Special Thanks
DAFNA PLEBAN

Editor
ERIC HARBURN

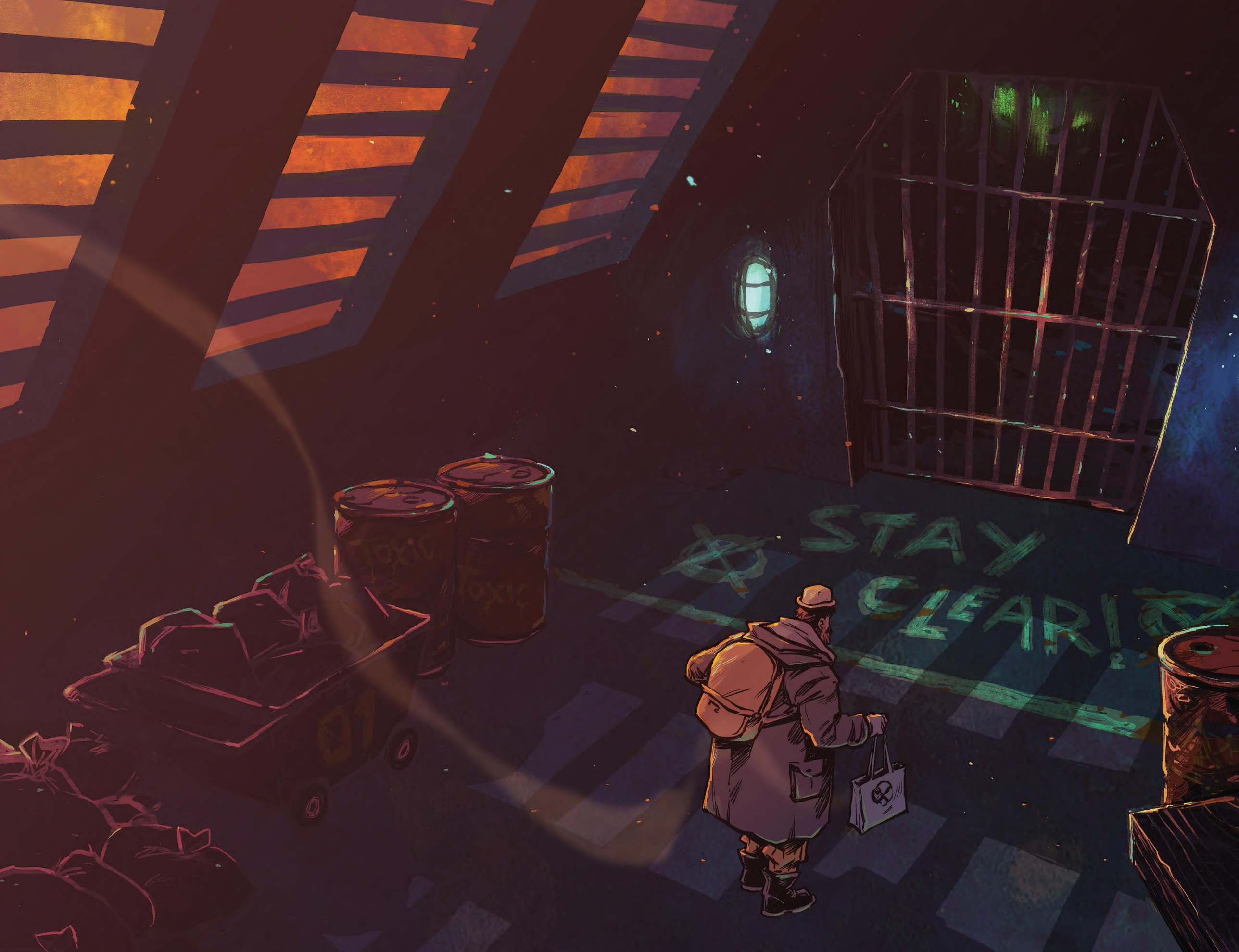
Cover by
MICHAEL DIALYNAS

ZAWA™
+ the Belly of the Beast

Written + Illustrated + Colored + Lettered by

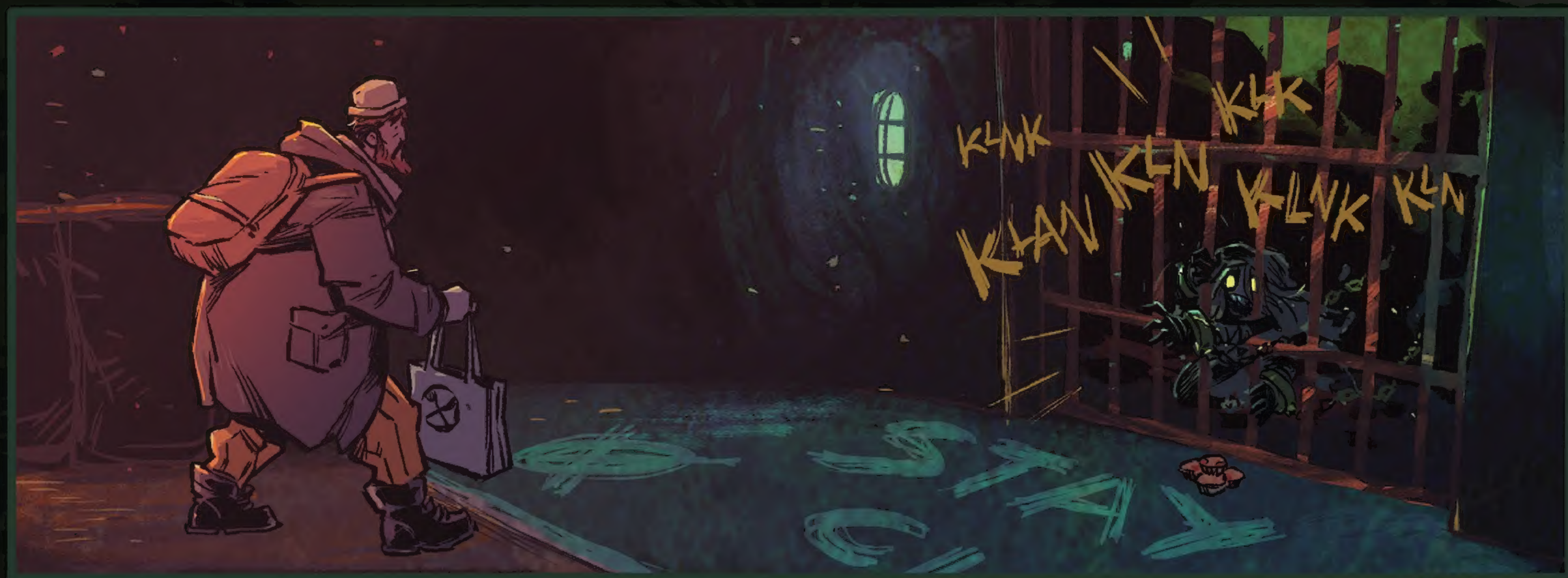
MICHAEL DIALYNAS

ZAWA is dedicated to the hungry monster of my life, Kat!
And to Scrumptious, Shadow, and Oliver,
who guarded me this past year while making this book.


STAY
CLEAR!
TOXIC
TOXIC

I'm here.
Sorry it's been a few days, but they're making things **harder**.
GOB
GOB
GOB
GOB
GOB
GOB

SNF!
SNF!


KLNK
KLNK
KLN
KLNK
KLNK
KLN
STAY
CLEAN

SNF
SNF
MMMMMM

This'll keep you **STRONG**.
It won't be long now.
SCOFF! NOM
NOM NOM
NOM NOM

MESA'S BOON
TEN YEARS LATER.
In the shadow of the **Mountain**, where the **Guardian** sleeps. Our city celebrates her **eternal slumber** under the protection of the Mayor and his mega-factory.
The streets of **Mesa's Boon** fill up annually for the week-long **Divine Feast** so we may give back what she provides us all year-round.
We protect and nourish our **Sleeping Guardian** because without her we have nothing.
Well, that's what we thought we were doing...
BURGU
THE MAYOR PROVIDES
FRESH FISH
BUR GUR
FOOD FEST!
CHOC

VROOM VROOM!
ERRRRRRR
TODAYS
ZA
PUNK
FOR SALE

Hey Thatcher? Spot's dropping eggs again!

APPLE

SNF SNIF!

OH...hey! What's cooking? Is that pumpkin and vanilla?

THE BLACK BIRD BAKERY

OPEN

Not sure, Leo, we scavenged some chopped-up veggies from some of the salad packs.

All I wanted was something simple but you know him, always trying to make something oddly delicious.

Hey!

BANDIT!

CHEF

LEO!
I made a NEW Guardian cookie.
Nice!
How's "the celebration" looking down there?

Thanks.
If we had better cinnamon sugar, maybe...

Don't sweat, they're amazing!
Not like this crap everyone gorges on the daily.
SPAG BOG

So, you ready to break into the factory and get some proper food that hasn't been "provided" to us?

Guys, guys. Keep it down, I think mum will be back soon.

KLAN KLANG KLANG
DING
Don't worry, Belle!

It's just the scary GOBBLEGEIST!
WOOOOOOO!

Would you cut that out? I don't wanna hear that tonight.
C'moooon, it's just the old mill.

Out of all the lies we have to live with, you really believe the Mayor has a MONSTER chained up in that factory?
JINGLE JINGLE!

Oh! Heeey
Mrs. Blackbird!
JINGLE JIN

Shower and bed.

I haven't stopped this week prepping the Mayor's new energy drink.

Be good, ok?

Or NOT?

*After our mum inevitably crashed from working on the Mayor's **new project**, we locked up for the night and watched as the city partied by the harbor, celebrating him for what little good he had done to our Mountain.*

*It was the perfect chance to go for a little "**light shopping**"...*

*...and **burgle** his **damn** factory.*

PARK BY THE EAST WALL!

VRRR

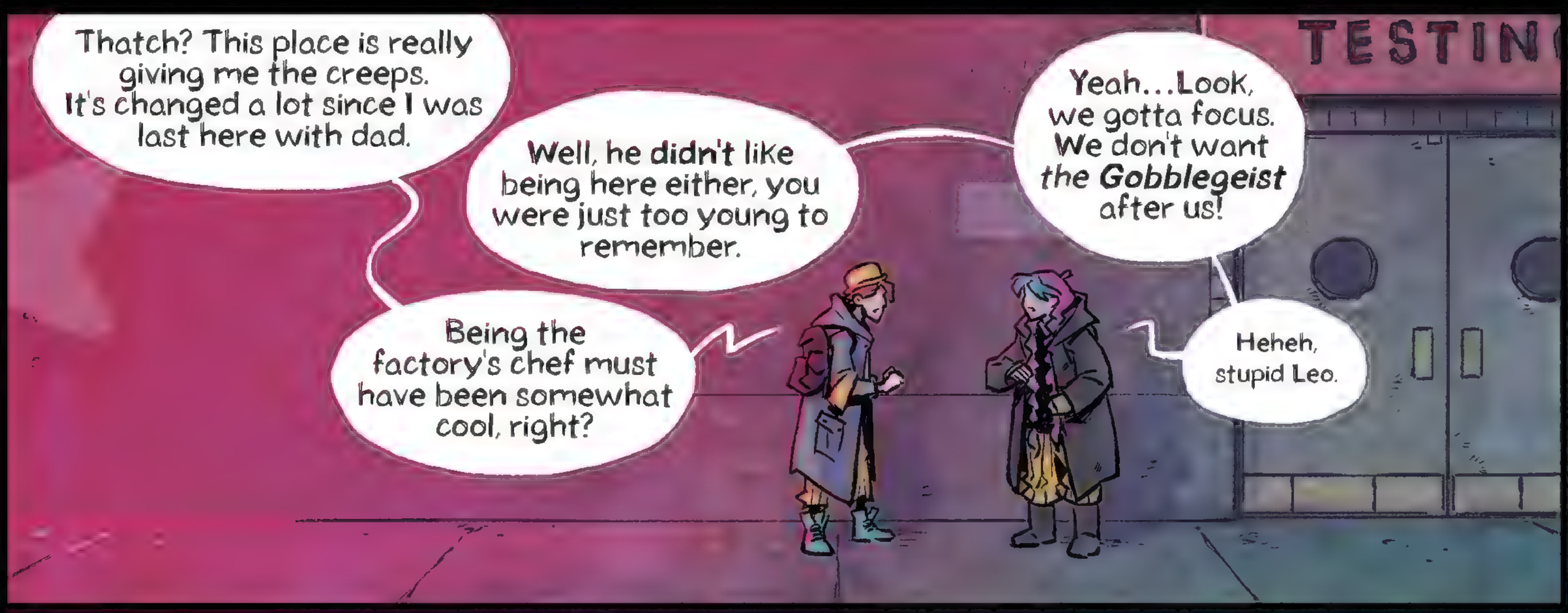
If I see anything...

...radio us. Ok?

SNP!

STAF ONLY

B'P!


Thatch? This place is really giving me the creeps. It's changed a lot since I was last here with dad.
Well, he didn't like being here either, you were just too young to remember.
Being the factory's chef must have been somewhat cool, right?
Yeah...Look, we gotta focus. We don't want the Gobblegeist after us!
Heheh, stupid Leo.
TESTIN

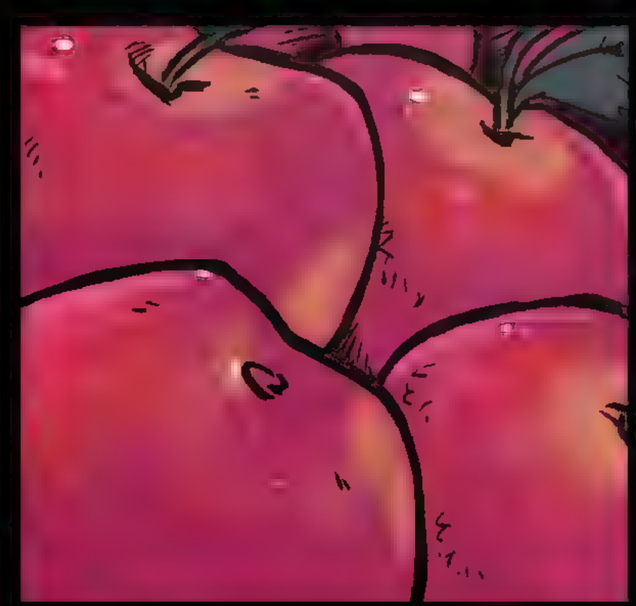
We're in. Meet us at the rendezvous point in about fifteen minutes.
Ok!
TEST POT

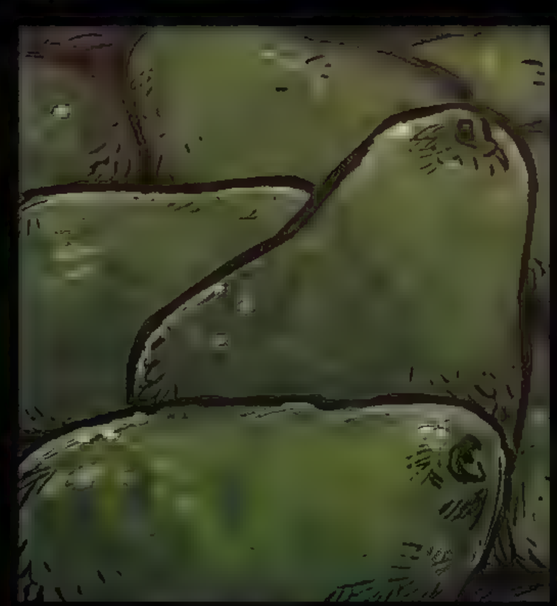
Things look more disgusting than people have been telling us.
The pipes for one look rusty and brown. These "meat" sauces are just sitting here in their own stench.
SALT
I don't wanna think about what would happen if I lit a match in here.
BANDIT?

Hey! Keep your walkie on if you're gonna wander.

Thatch...
I found a pantry full of UNCOOKED FOOD!

Great. Grab what you can. Also, remind me what baking soda does.
BAKING SODA
Yeah, we need that, it'll help lighten the texture of my cookies. And we can always use it to clean stuff!





RICE
RICE

The amount of things I could make with all these oranges! Tarts, lollies, JAMS!
CHEF
I don't understand why the Mayor doesn't just sell us these, or let us plant a tree.

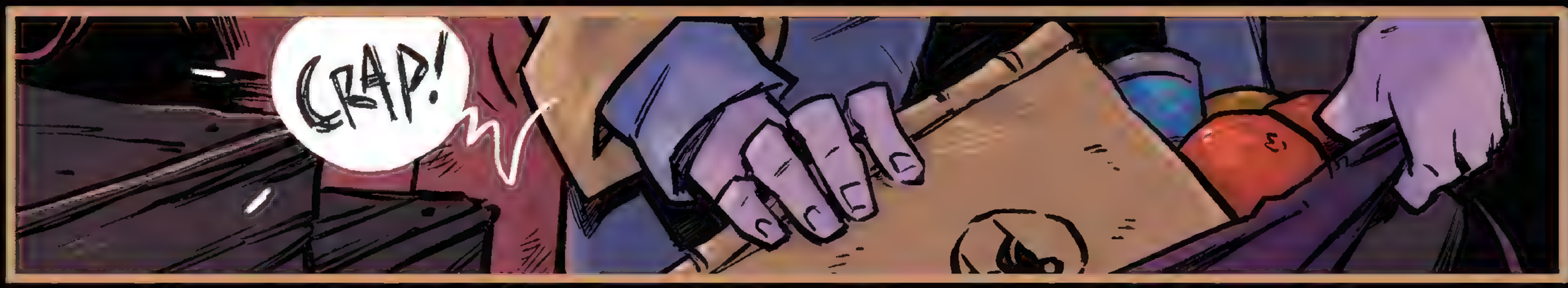
You sound like dad.

The Mayor is just greedy. Dad had all the best intentions to make use of our Mountain's resources and provide everyone in Mesa's Boon with a proper meal, but after he died the Mayor just took over and monopolized the idea.

I bet some freshly grilled mushrooms would be better in those BUR GURS he sells us in the machines.

Dad would've had a great recipe.

GET OUT! Use the garbage chutes.


CRAP!

Leo!
I'm heading back! Bandit's exiting through the sewage pipe!
PLAN B!

HEY
Huh?

DON'T GO DOWN THAT CHUTE!

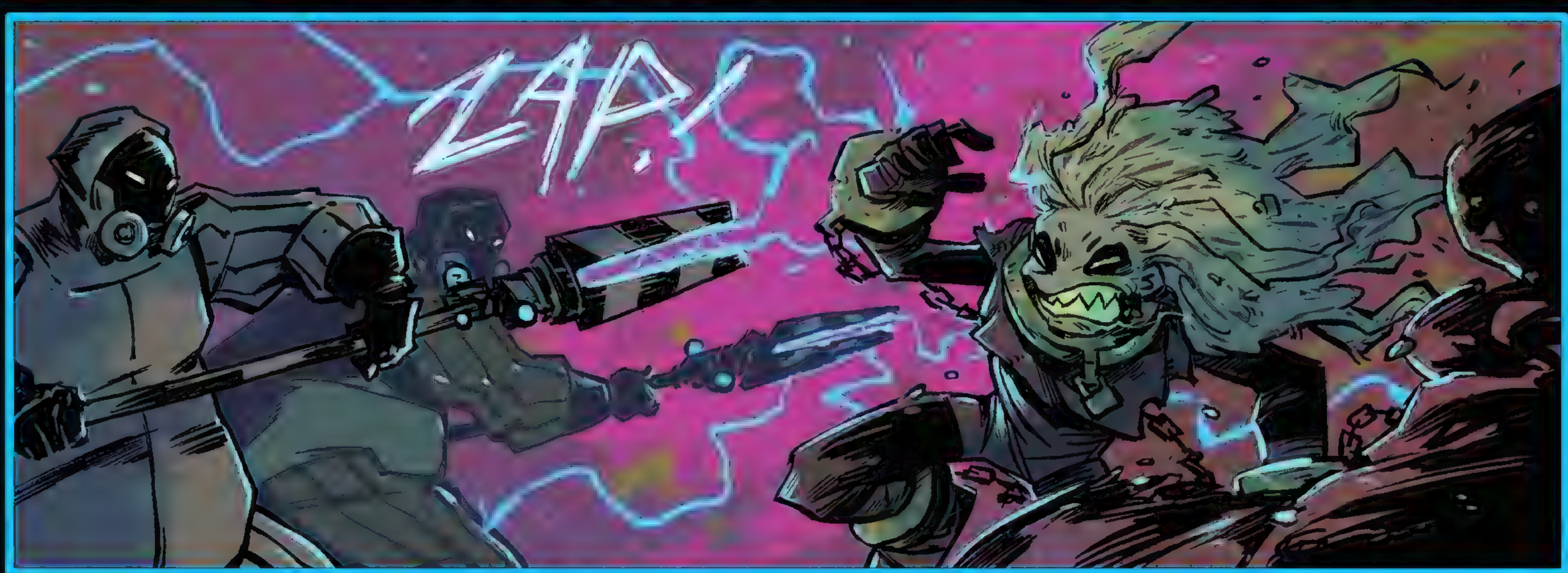
DOM BOM
SLIP!

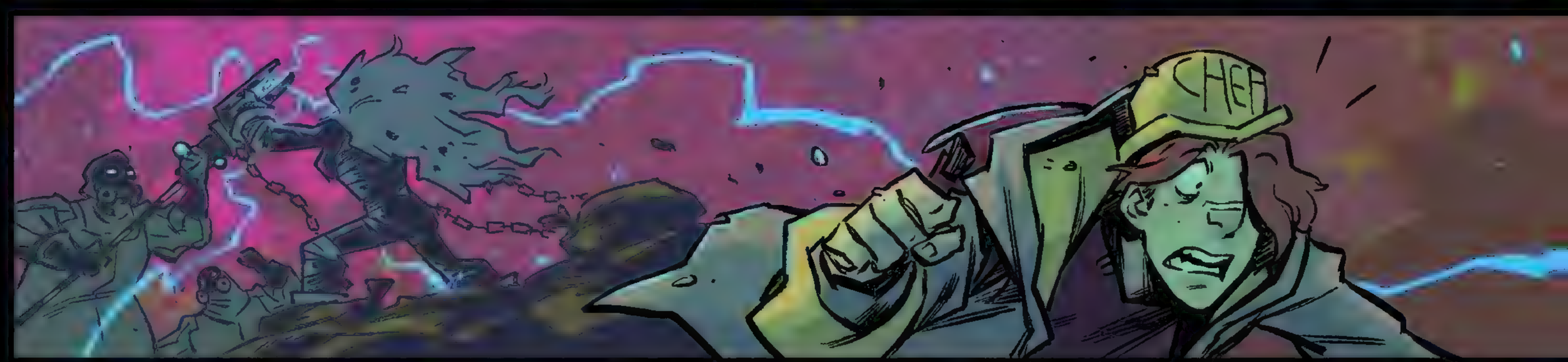
And that's where our shopping spree took a **monstrous** turn.
OOF
GOB GOB GOB
It can't be...
GOB
...real.
You OK?

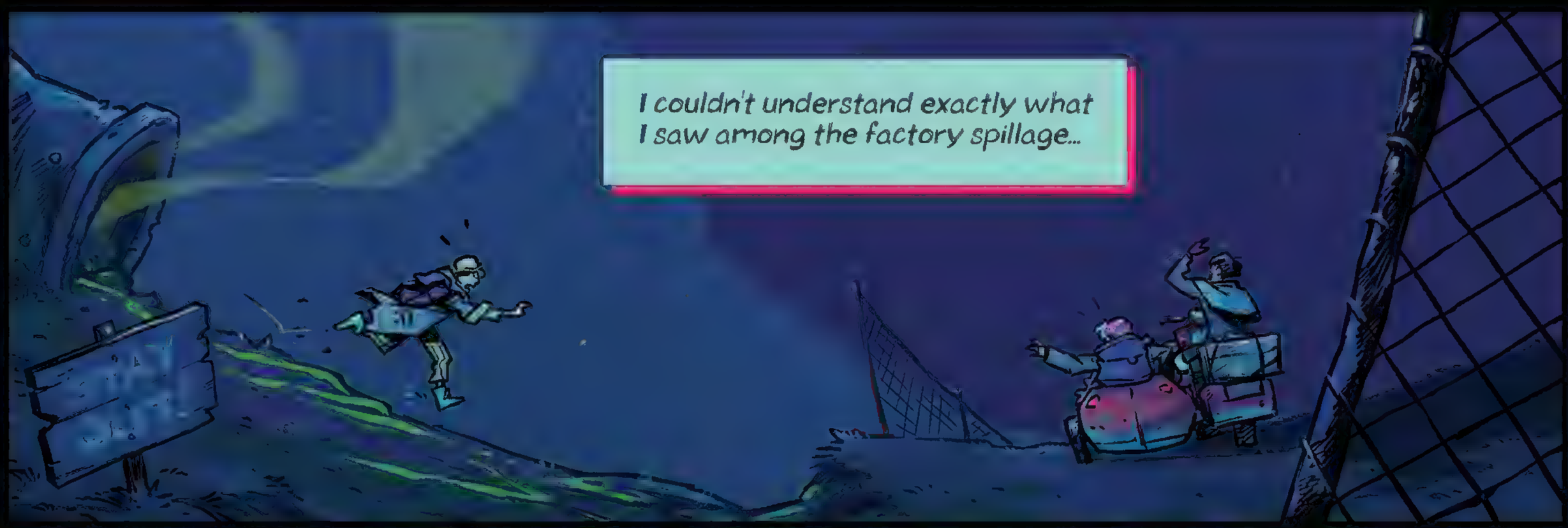
CHEF
Sis? The G-Gobble-geist is...
SNIF SNIF?
REAL!
SNIF SNIF
BUH-DOOM!

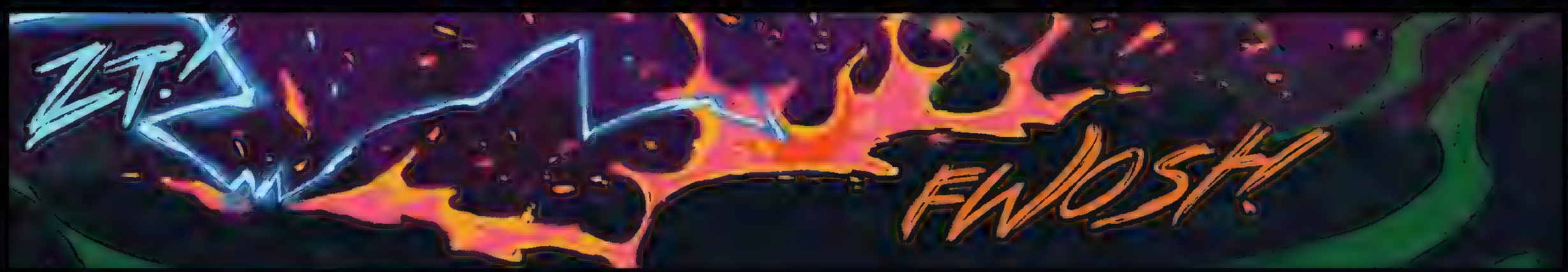
FLANK THE BEAST AND GRAB THE THIEF!

GRRR!

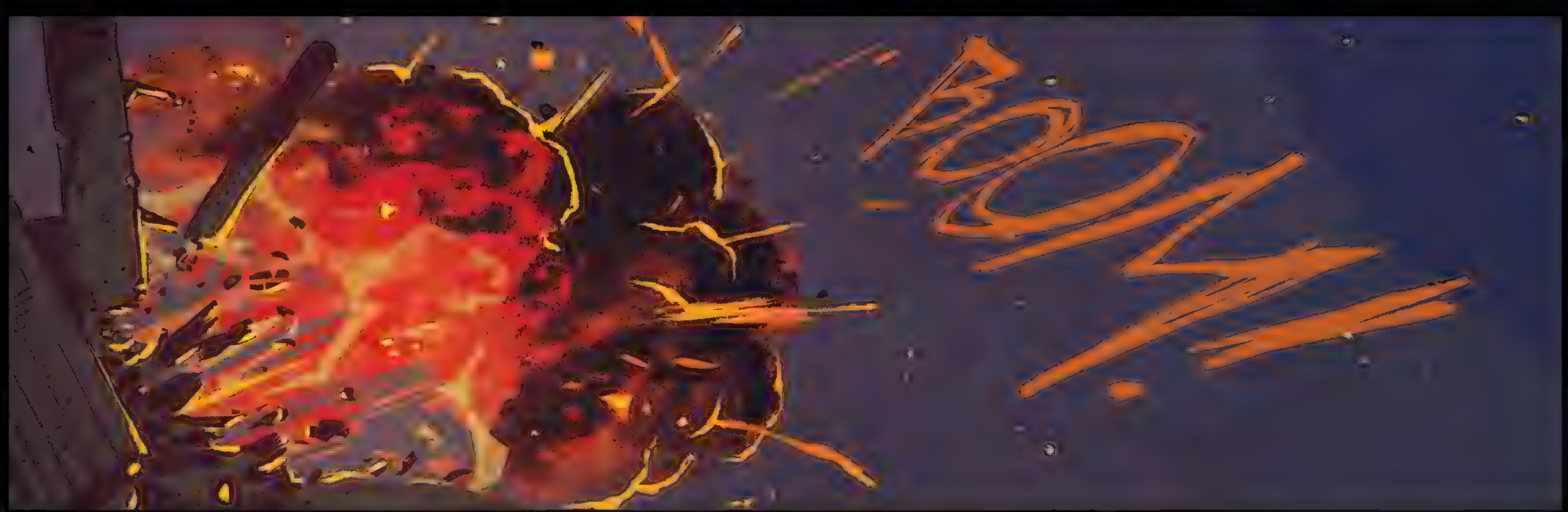

ZAP!


CHIEF


I couldn't understand exactly what I saw among the factory spillage...


FWOSH!

But **Mesa's Boon** was going to celebrate its **last** Divine Feast that year.



I should have been **terrified**.
But I wasn't.

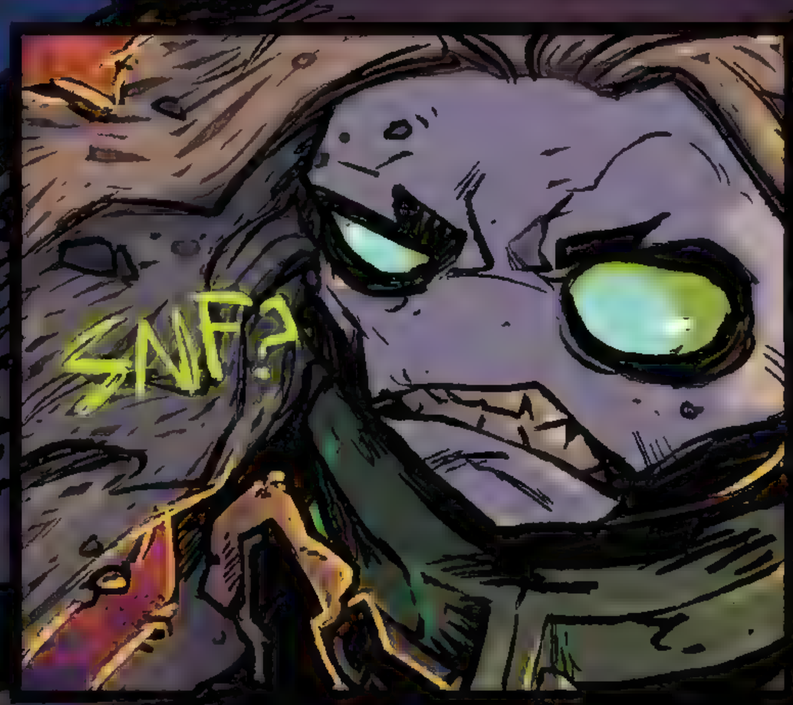
ZANIA!
LAST Guardian
OF THE
MOUNTAIN
HEAR US!

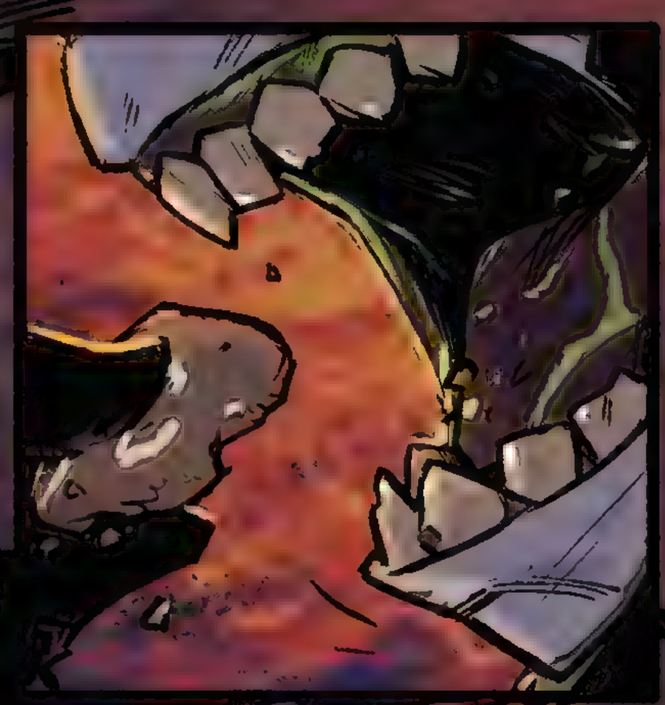
They are killing us!
BU-DOOM.
OUR HEART beats heavier
BU-DOOM.
BECOME THE DESOLATION! that they deserve.
BUH-DOOOM!

Save us.

FROM THEIR

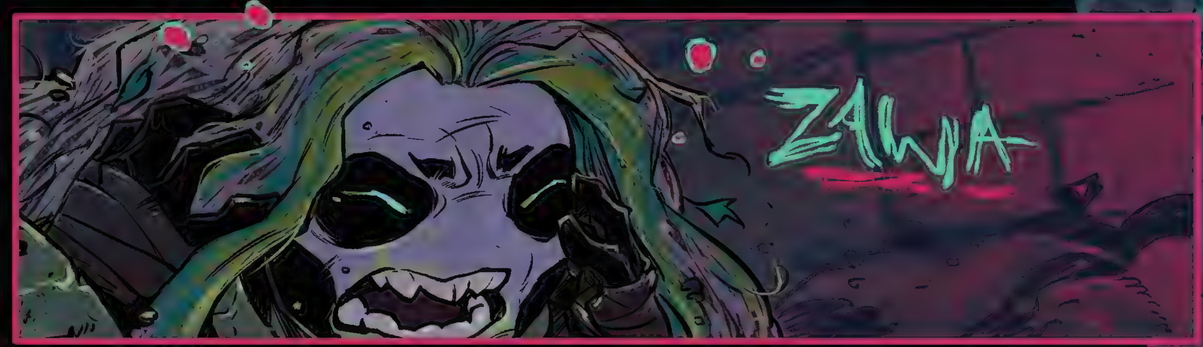
HUNGER.

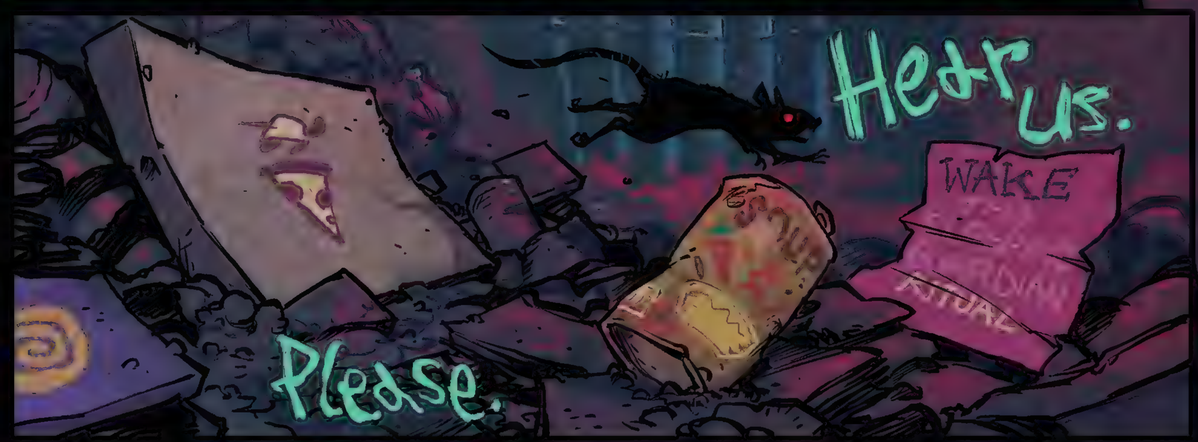


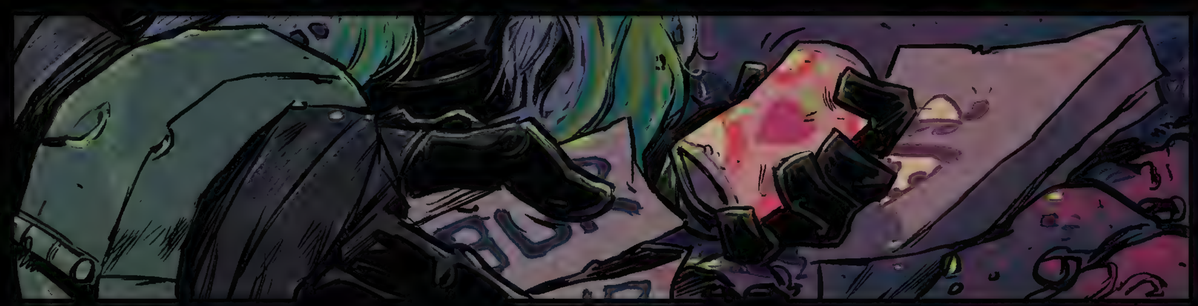


BUR
GUR

What in the happened?
Not sure, sir. The fire seems to be contained.
The Divine Feast is nearly upon us.
If she has escaped, then everything will be ruined!


ZAWA


Hear us.
WAKE
Please.



Stop the
CRUNCH SCOFF! GOB GOB

THE MOUNTAIN PROVIDES
ZAWA!
ONLY YOU

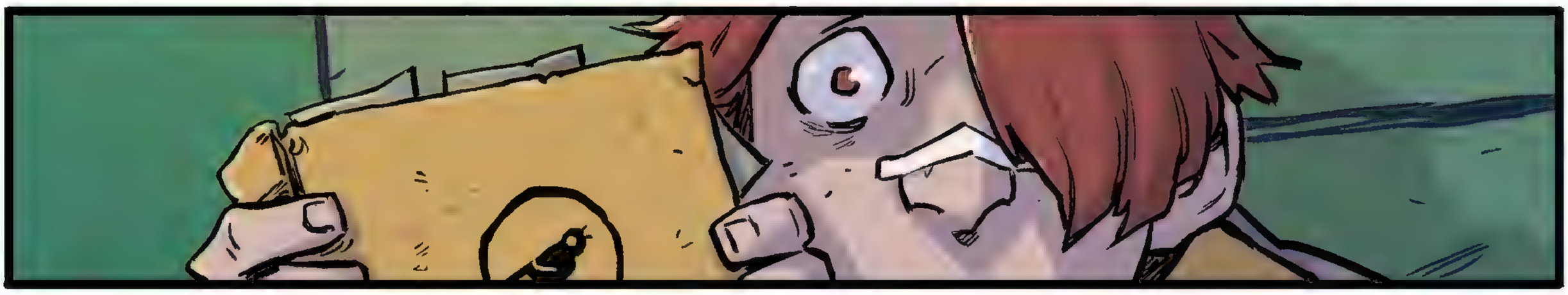
Can help us

Dee-Stroy THEM.
SNF!
JUMP
The Guardian was finaly **free** from her prison. Her mind was telling her one thing but her **gut** another.
Coo-Kie?
Conflicted, she let her **belly** take the initiative this time.

Yo, what happened in the garbage chutes?
It was crazy! There was a girl, she was angry and in chains!
KEEP OUT!
There was a girl living in the rubbish?
Then two pudgey guards showed up, they had electrical prods and started fighting with her!
CHEF
C'mon, stop messing with me, I think the stinky fumes got to you.
I dunno, but whatever it was, it's blown our cover.
There's NO WAY we're gonna be able to get back in there now.

Alright, let's see what we got. Hope it's enough until things die down.
Okie dokie.

Baking soda, beans, unsweetened cereal, carrots.
We can plant them and produce more.
Bandit?
Oh, and I think I got that cinnamon sugar you wanted.



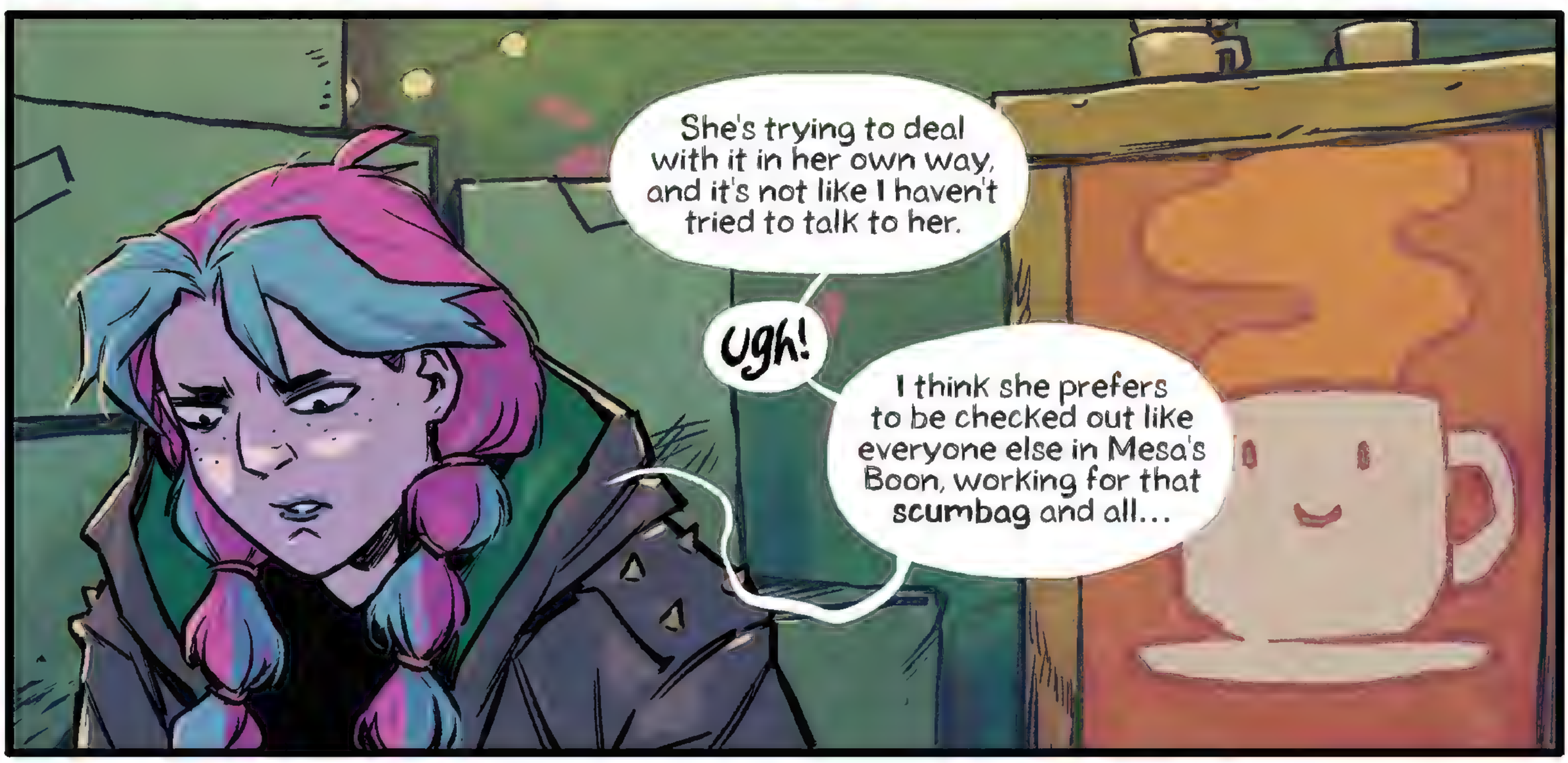
DAD'S COOK-BOOK?
Where did you get that? Was it in the factory?!

I found it in the **supply room** before you radioed me.
CHEF

Didn't mum say that this was **lost** when he...

Not sure mum realizes most of what's been going on since then.

I mean if the Mayor is just gonna straight up **steal** dad's recipes, he's really doing a good job making them taste like crap too.
Then why doesn't mum say anything?
CHEF
COMP


She's trying to deal with it in her own way, and it's not like I haven't tried to talk to her.
Ugh!
I think she prefers to be checked out like everyone else in Mesa's Boon, working for that **scumbag** and all...

The majority of this place just does what he says and the **Divine Feast** every year gives him more power to push even harder.
My yaya says that there's gonna be a **huge demonstration** tomorrow against his company.
I didn't want to drag you into this but I think we've gotta help them.

Wait, wait, I thought we were going to make some old recipes to show him up.
Stealing food is way different from what you are sayin'.
CHEF

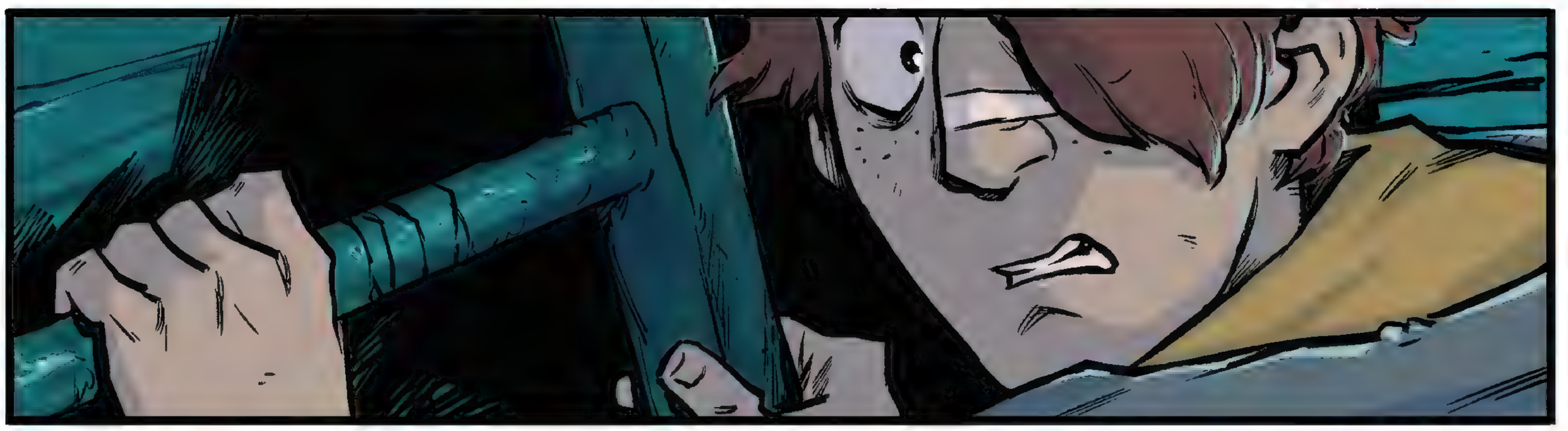
I don't want to get mum and the bakery in trouble.
Yeah, I don't want to either but he's literally taken everything from us and **that** book is **proof**.

Crap! I gotta go, Yaya will have my head if she realizes I'm still out.
I'll make sure to swing by in the **morning**!

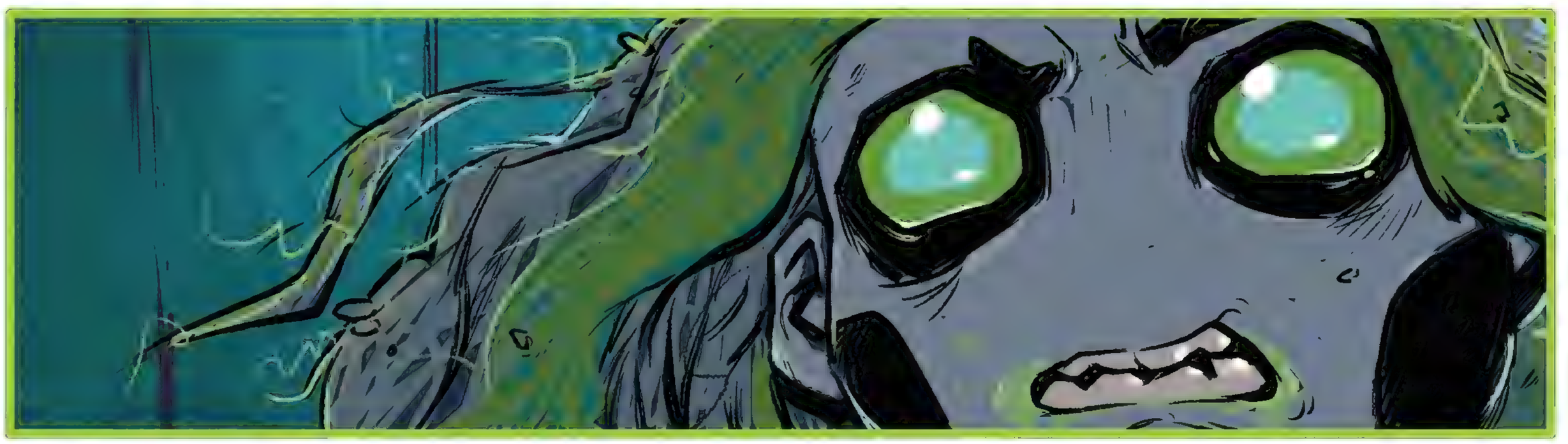
You know I'm right.
We can't just keep living like this. Mum's a zombie, everyone is working to the bone and he's dictating what he says are the **Mountain's wishes.**
I just need you to **cook** and maybe it'll be enough to sway people.
Yeah.
Got it, sis.

KRASH!

KRASH

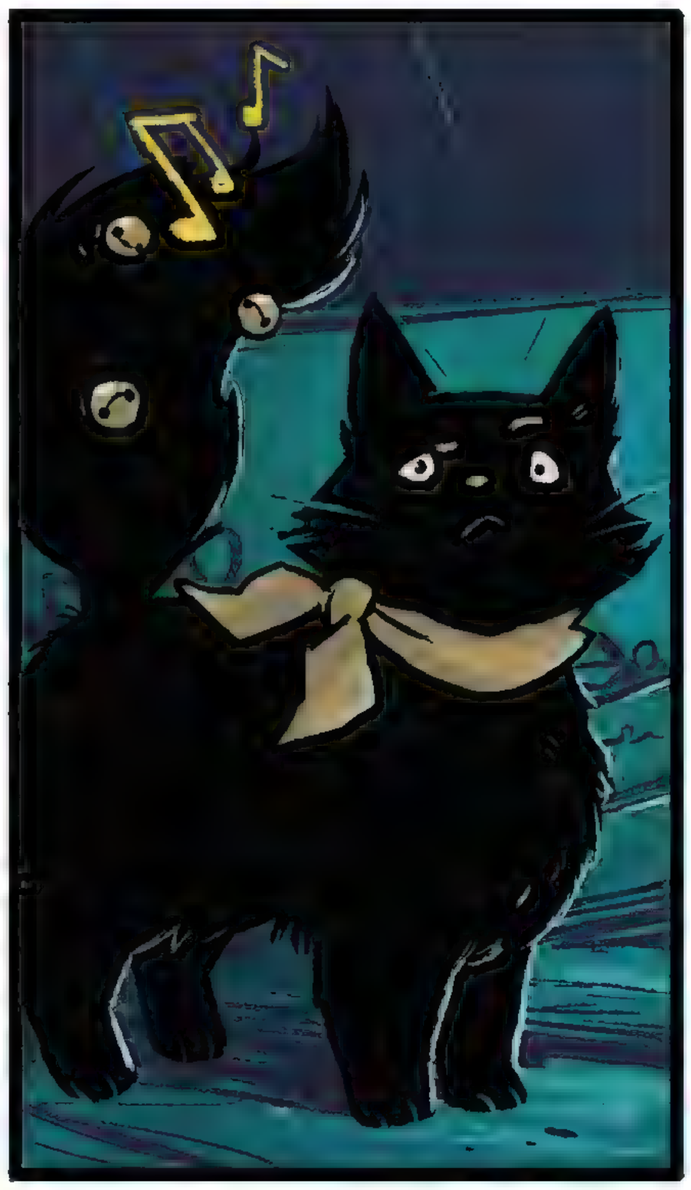


JINGLE!
HISSSSGRRR
NO.
NO.
NO.!



OMG!*

* OH MY GUARDIAN!



NOM NOM NOM

CHEF

Hey Bandit. Sorry about all that, I just get worked up...

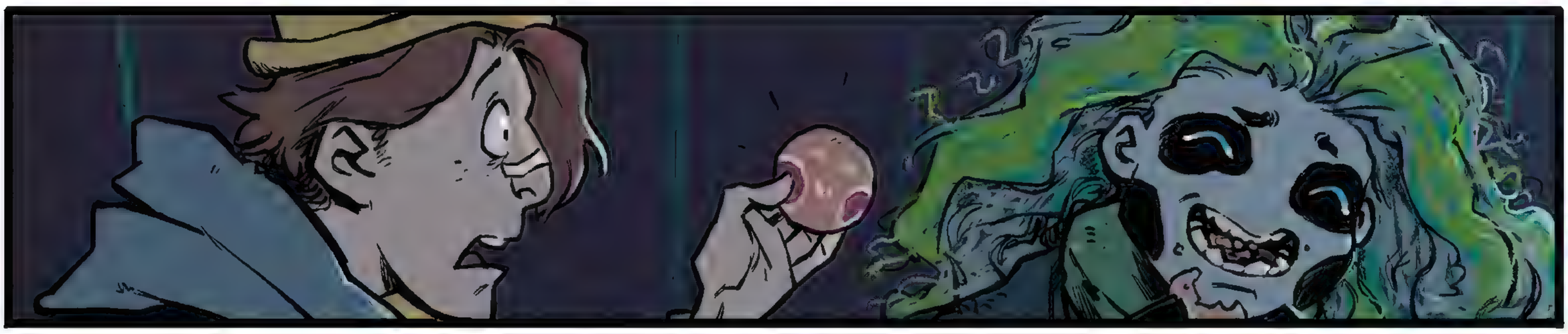
Hey!

It's Ok. It's Ok.
This is the girl that was chained up. She's just hungry.
CHEF
Not a monster.
NOM NOM

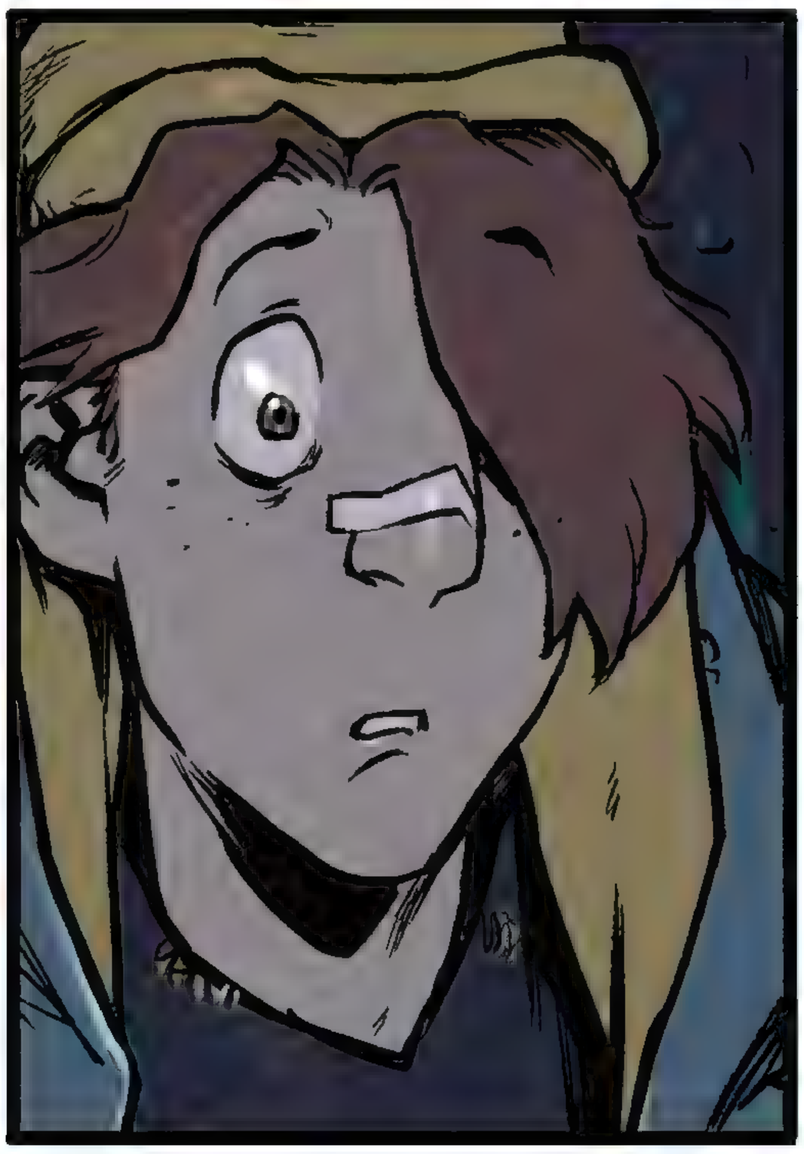
Girl? But she doesn't have a nose!

I think she was held hostage.
Can you talk?

She really likes your Guardian cookies.
Dad's Guardian cookies.
NOM NOM NOM



No way.



GOOWAR-dian!
ZA-WA!

Her hair just **bloomed** or something!
CHEF
She said "**Guardian Zawa**"!
She's the Guardian, **Thatcher!** And she's having the **Divine Feast** in our attic!
Wait, **what?**
Zawa? You're hungry, right?
HAN-GOO-RY!
Y'know what, maybe we should get her cleaned up first.
And get those **chains** off too.
CHEF
Aha, **you** can do that.

CHUNK!

There ya' go, um, Zawa?
Gosh these are heavy!

So here's the shower. There should be enough warm water.
I've left you some clean clothes over there too.

We'll be just outside getting you something to eat. OK?

Don't you think it's **weird**, Bandit?
I mean, how are you so **sure** she's the Guardian?
Our city's built on the fact that there is one and the **Mayor** really likes to call himself the **Mountain's prophet** and all, but we've never seen her before. I'm really confused.
CHEF

Maybe **Zawa** just emerged early.

And why was she chained up in the factory?
2
3

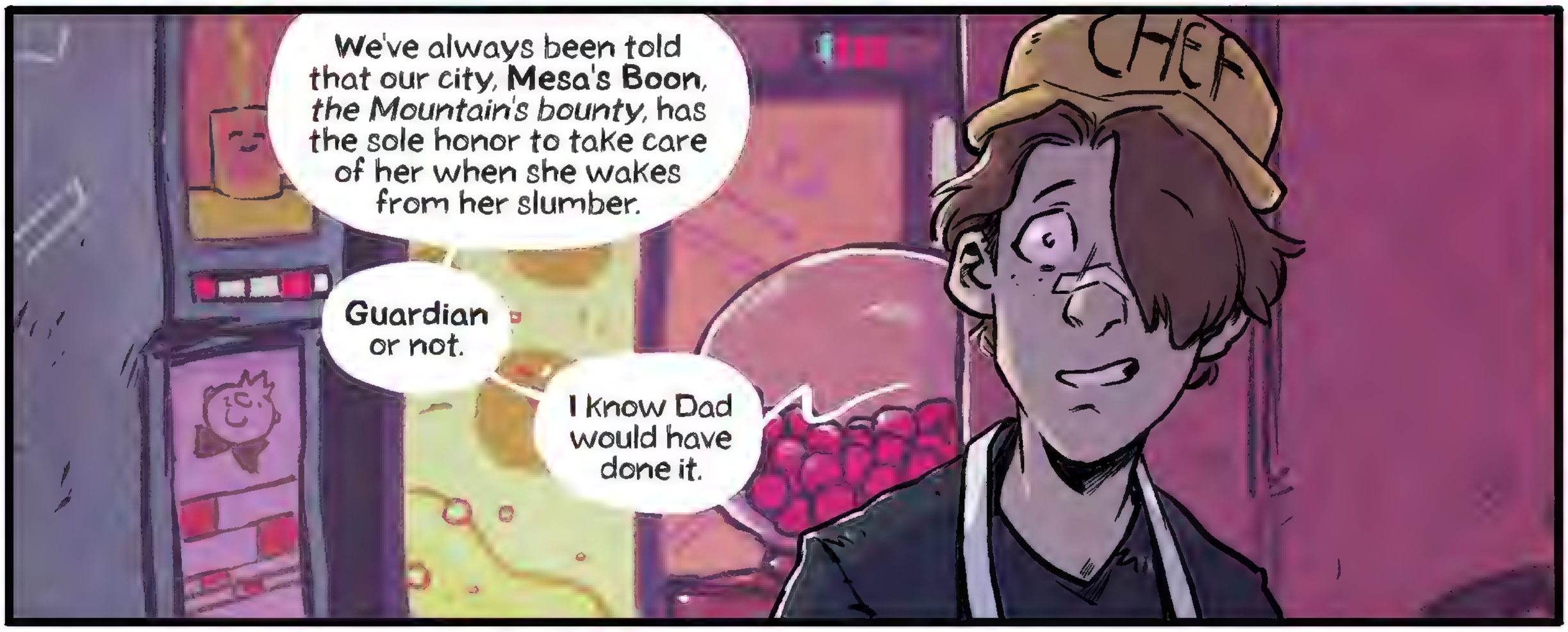
I dunno, but I feel that it's our duty to feed someone that's hungry either way, Thatch.
CHEF

"She's **gotta** be the Guardian!"
Blegh!

Are you sure she's not something else?
SOLD OUT SORRY

I mean she could even be the **Gobblegeist** and **I** just unchained it.
And let it use our shower **AND** we're making it a **midnight snack.**
You hear what I'm saying, right?
CHEF
BUR GUR
SPAG

Squeee!


We've always been told that our city, **Mesa's Boon**, *the Mountain's bounty*, has the sole honor to take care of her when she wakes from her slumber.
Guardian or not.
I know Dad would have done it.
CHEF

CHEF
Jingle Jingle!

Hi!
Ooooh! SNACKS!!!
PIF
BUR
GUR

SNIF!
BUR

RAAA!
CHEF
BUR
GUR

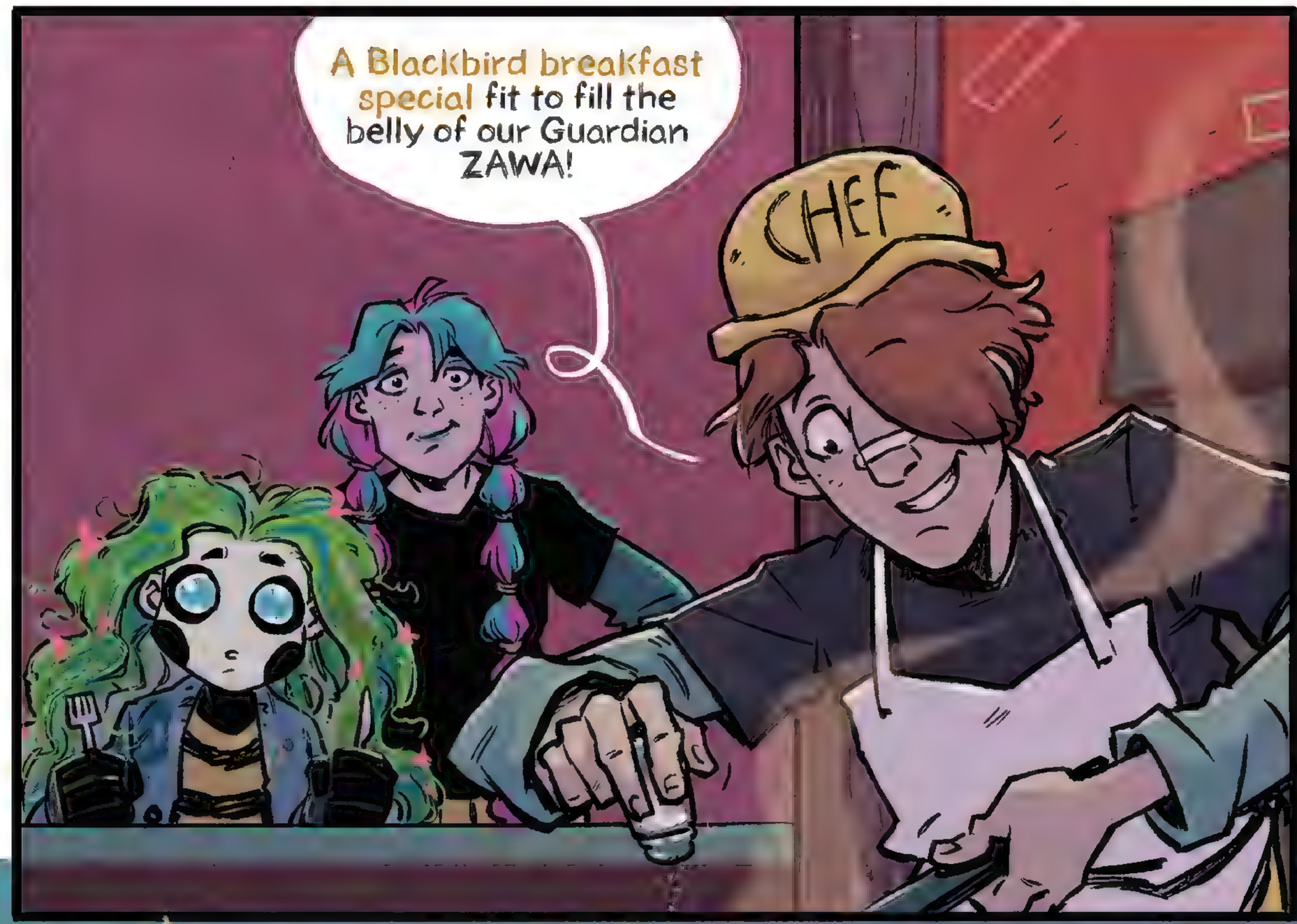
OK YOU DON'T LIKE BUR GURS!

NO!

NO!
NO!
BUR

SOLD OUT.
Keep CLEAN!
Keep Clean!
BUR

It's ok. They really do taste bad.
Bad?
Hey sis, I've got a better idea.
SPOT! I'll need some eggs, please + thank you!
I'm stupid to not have thought of this before, but our guest needs something hearty and filling!
And I bet there's something cool in here.
CHEF
ALSO
KING MUSHROOMS!
1× Red Potato.
for extra fluff!
MOO MOO
Spot's XL eggs!


A Blackbird breakfast special fit to fill the belly of our Guardian ZAWA!
CHEF

RED POTATO OMELETTE WITH KING MUSHROOMS + SPRING ONIONS!
TADA!

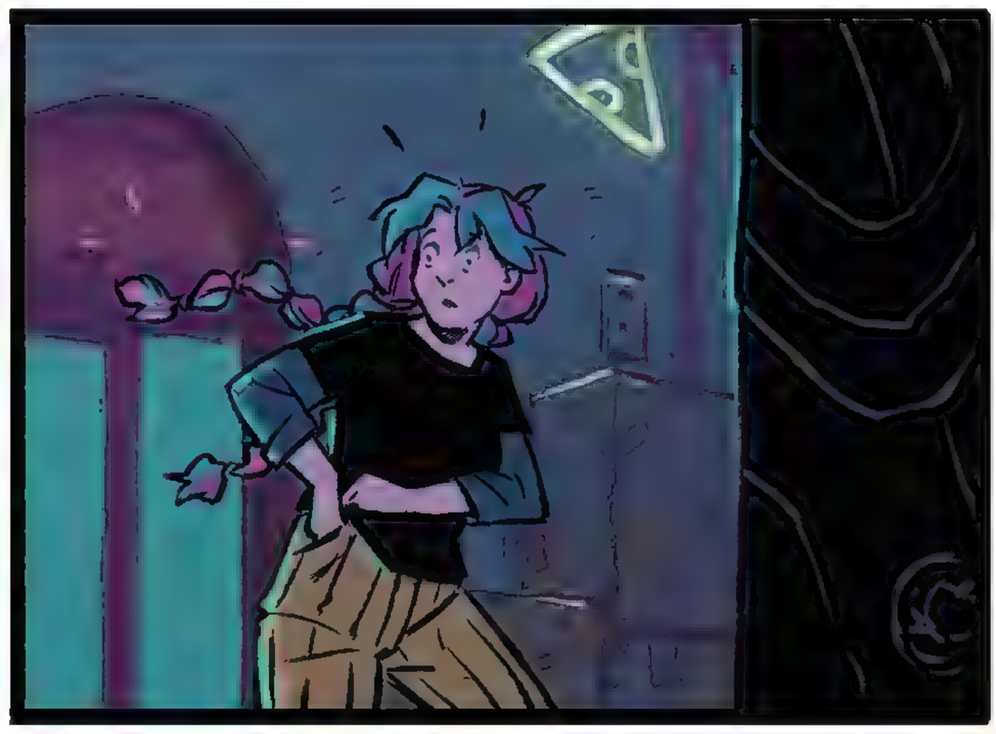
mmm!!!

BLACKBIRD BAKERY

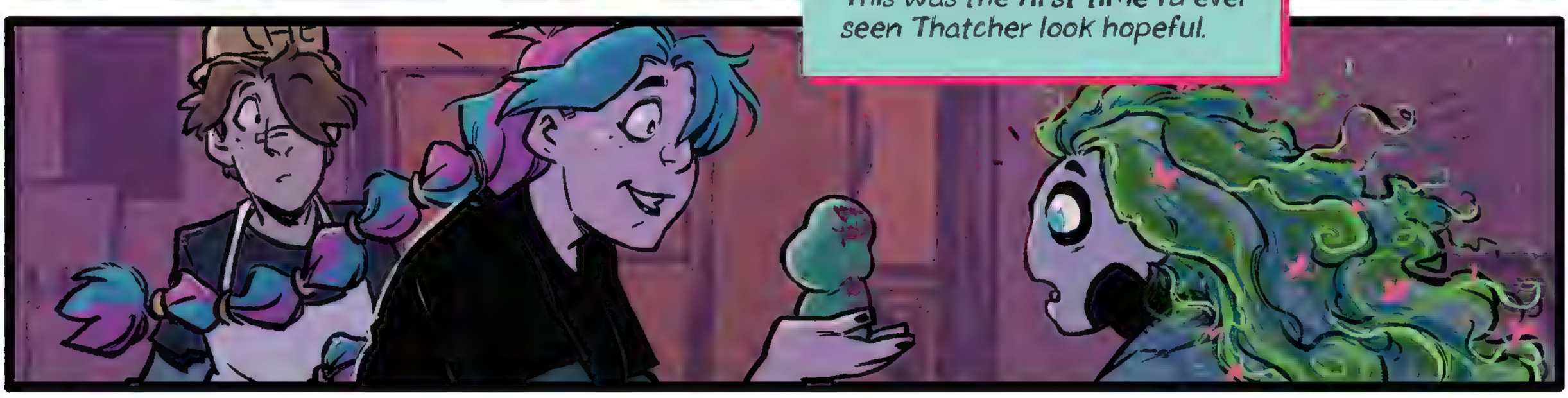
THANKS CHEF!

Oh wait, we haven't been introduced! My name is **Bandit Blackbird** and this is my sister **Thatcher**.
And you've also had the pleasure of meeting our guard cat **Belle + Spot**, our provider of eggs.
CHEF

ZAWA is actually real.
"The feeding of the Guardian during the Divine Feast grants Zawa the powers to protect our Mountain."
The people of our city have always talked about the legend, but I never believed them, I always thought they were superstitious. I thought it was just wishful thinking to get through the day.
WAIT. The wish dolls!



This was the first time I'd ever seen Thatcher look hopeful.



It was a welcome change compared to her **resting sour face** that would make even a **lemon** blush.

Talking about sour fruit...

TWISH

We still had no idea what the Mayor's true plans were.

SIR? What's this?

[redacted]

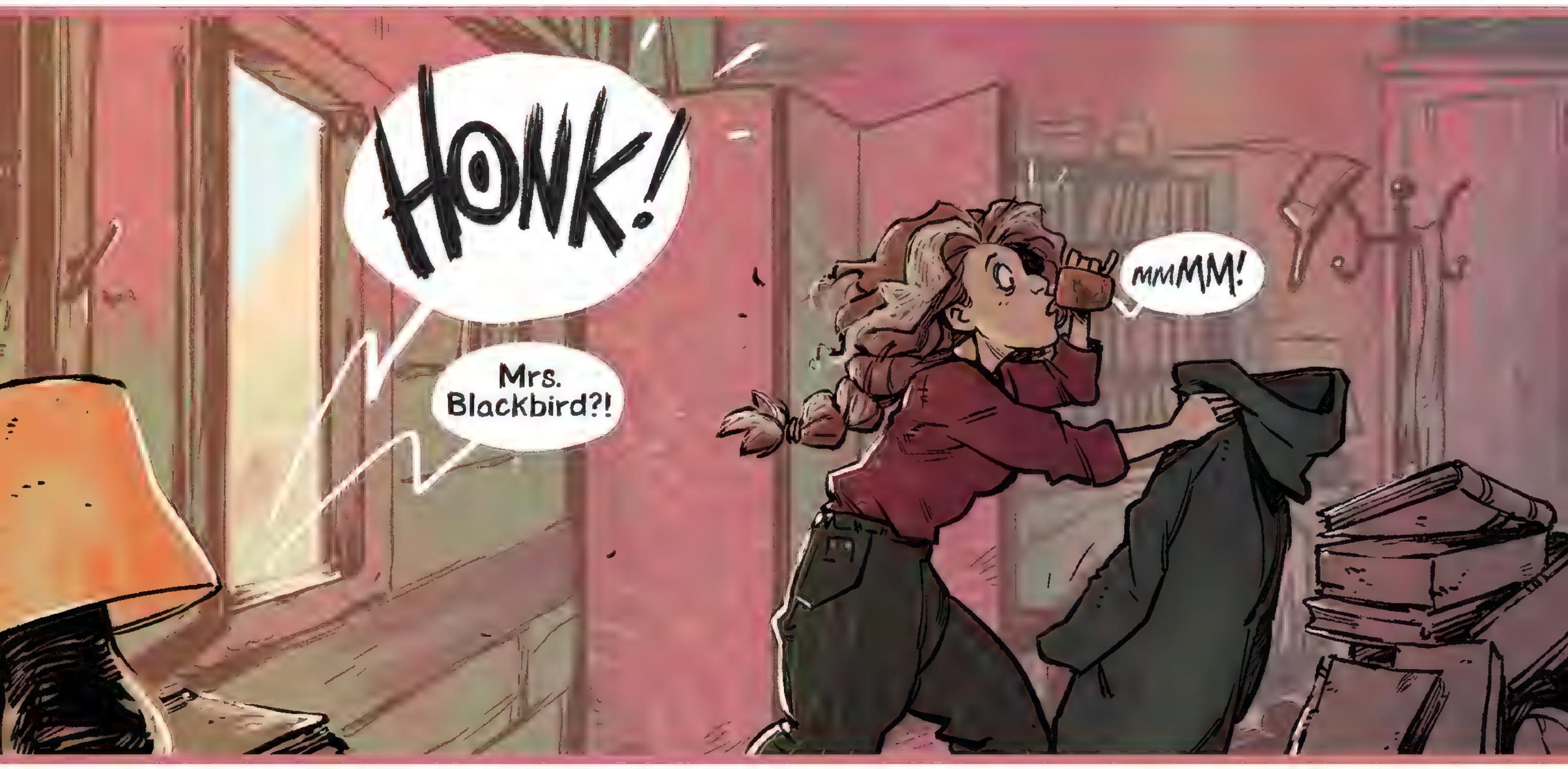
The big **announcement** is going down today! She can't be loose out there!

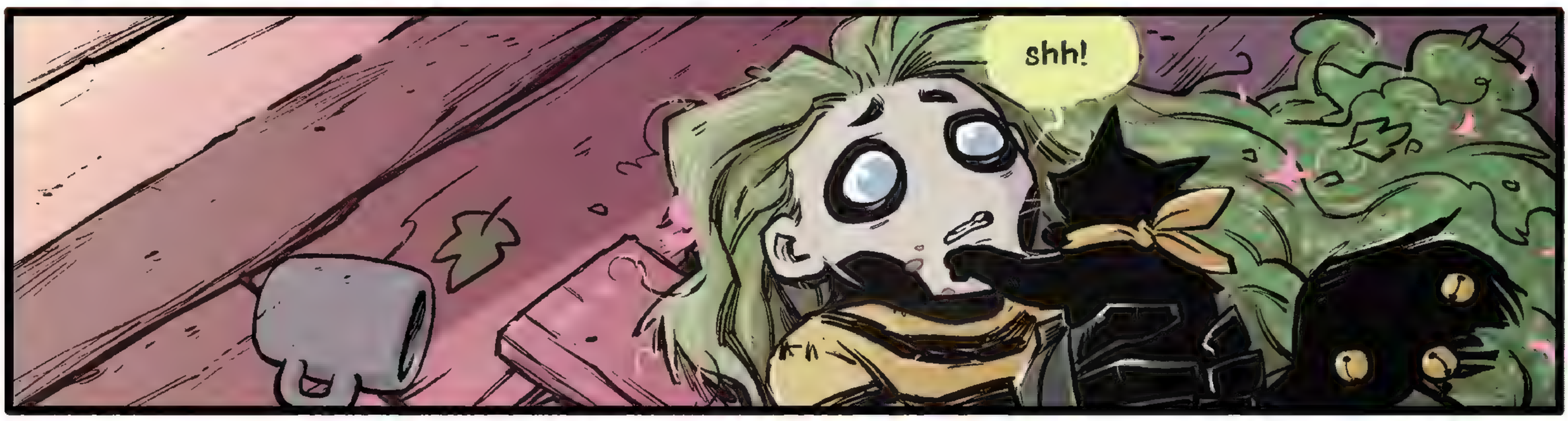
Keep an eye out.

And find her **ALIVE!**

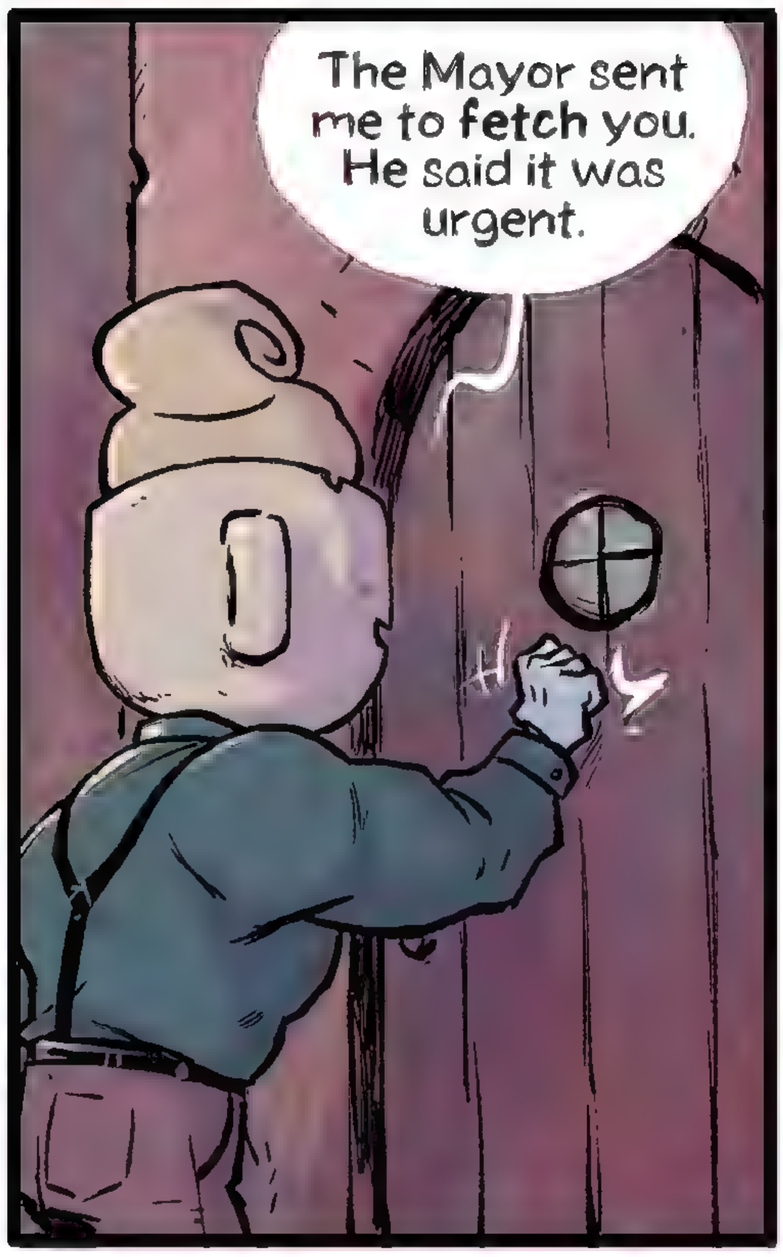
The morning after, I had prepared some treats for Zawa to snack on so we didn't have another ruckus in the attic.
NOM NOM NOM NOM
ZZZ
We made sure to tell her to stay out of mum's sight.
CITIZENS OF MESA'S BOON!
THE DIVINE FEAST IS UPON US!!
THE MAYOR PROVIDES!
BUY LOCAL!
[redacted]!! NONO I'M LATE!

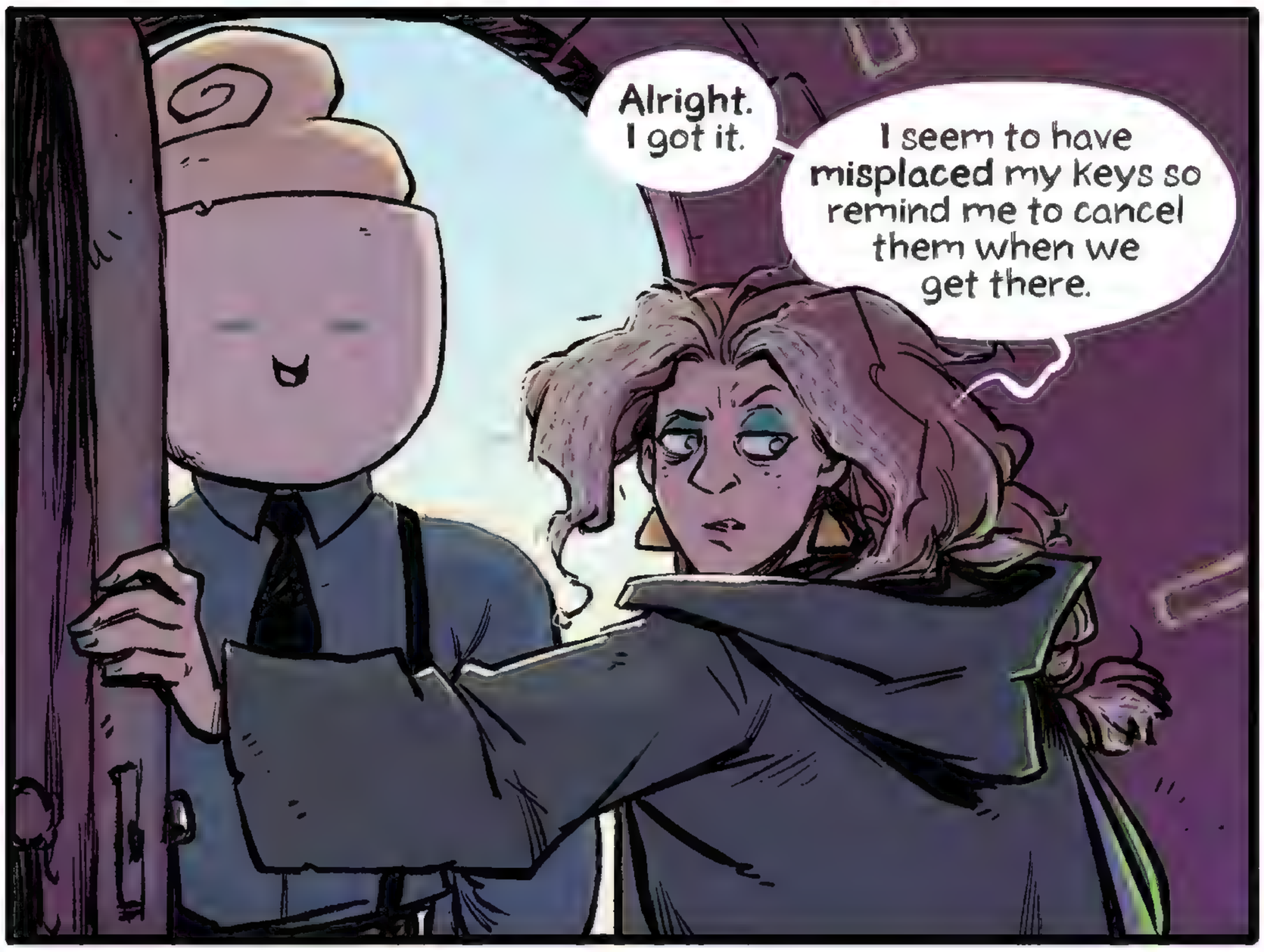
Doop de doo!

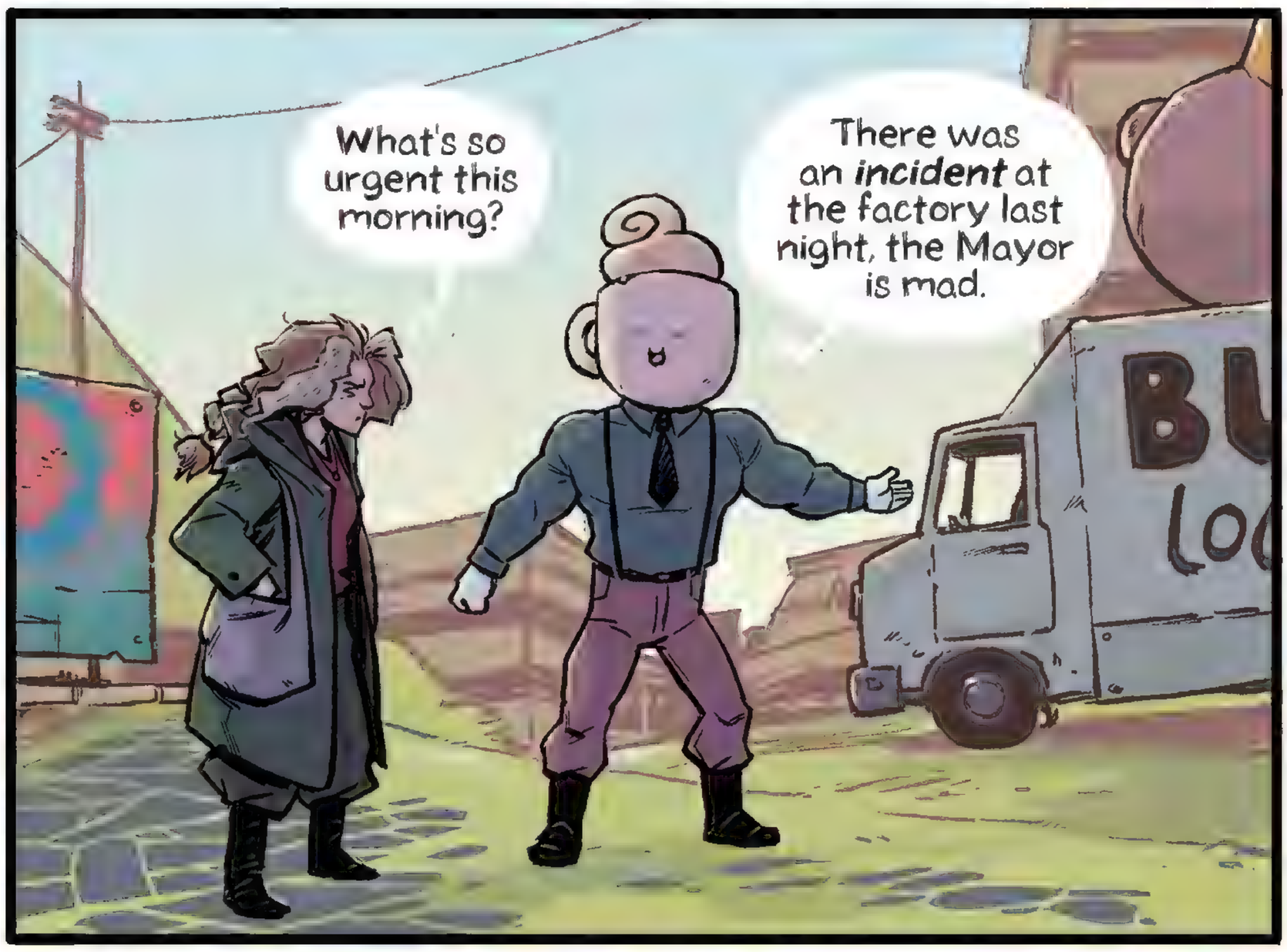

HONK!
Mrs. Blackbird?!
mmMM!


shh!

C'mon, I'm too tired to do this right now.
Where are my KEYS? [redacted]!!
DIVINE festival

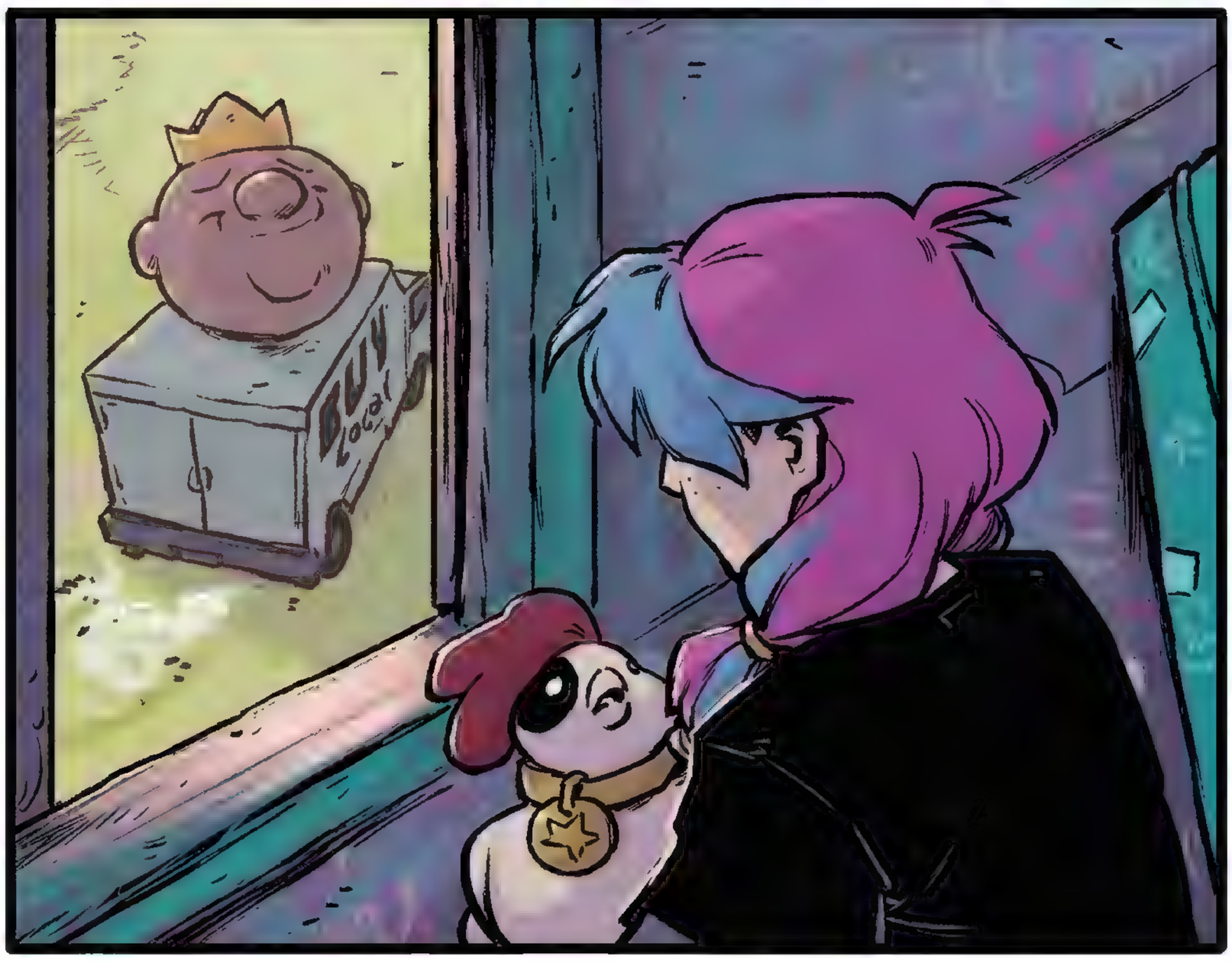

The Mayor sent me to **fetch** you. He said it was urgent.


Alright. I got it.
I seem to have **misplaced** my keys so remind me to cancel them when we get there.

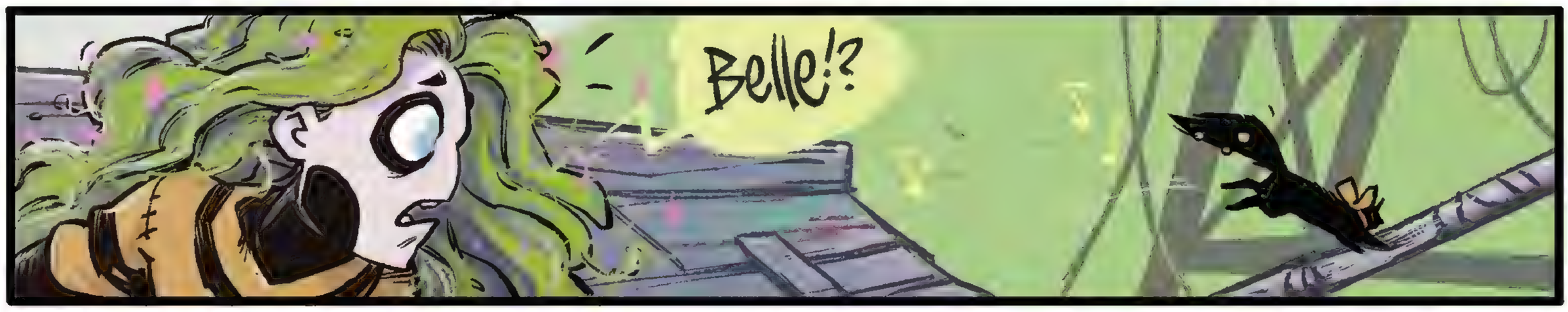

What's so urgent this morning?
There was an ***incident*** at the factory last night, the Mayor is mad.

He requested you help ***force*** the drilling project ASAP.
And he said that "the ***clock*** is ticking."

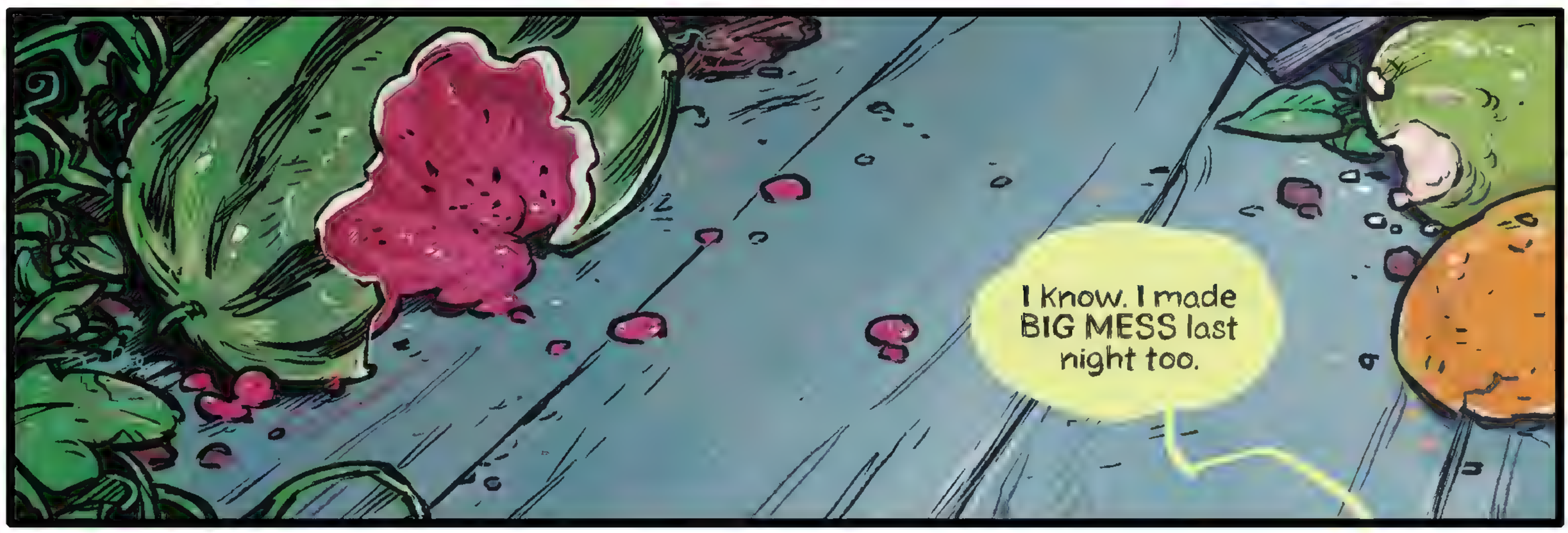
Keep it down, my kids are home.
Sorry, Mrs. Blackbird.


BUY LOCAL

All I do is make MESS, Belle.


Belle!?

Waiiiit. Wait for me.

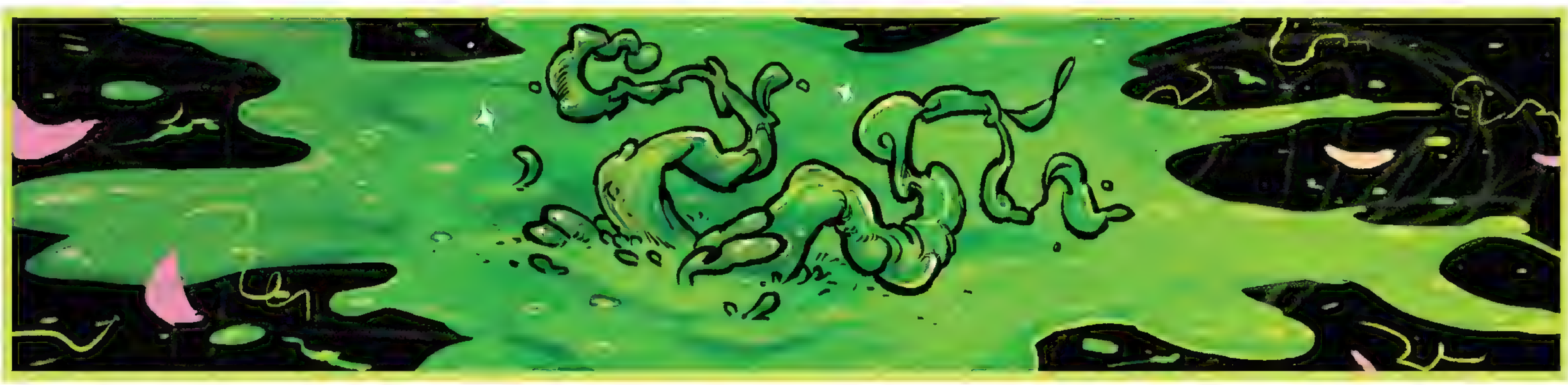

I know. I made BIG MESS last night too.

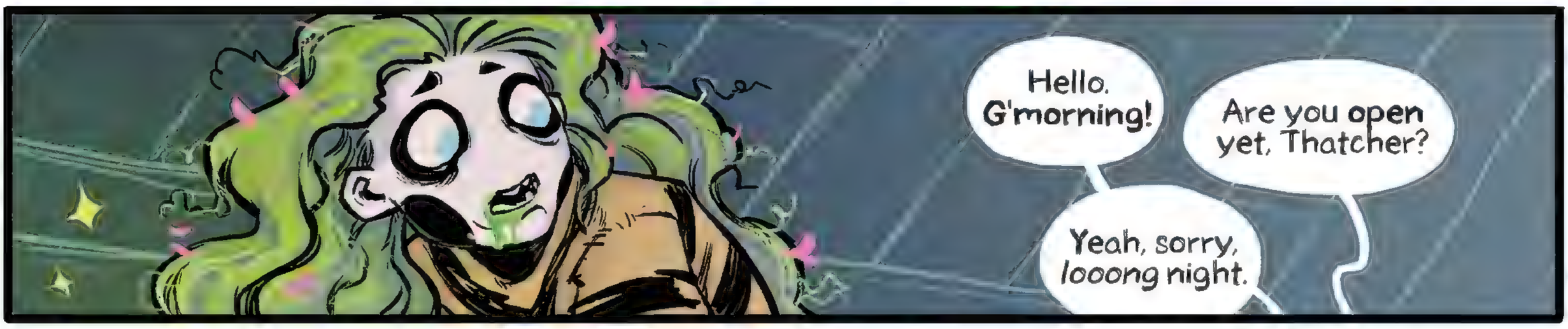
YES, Belle! **CLEAN** mess.

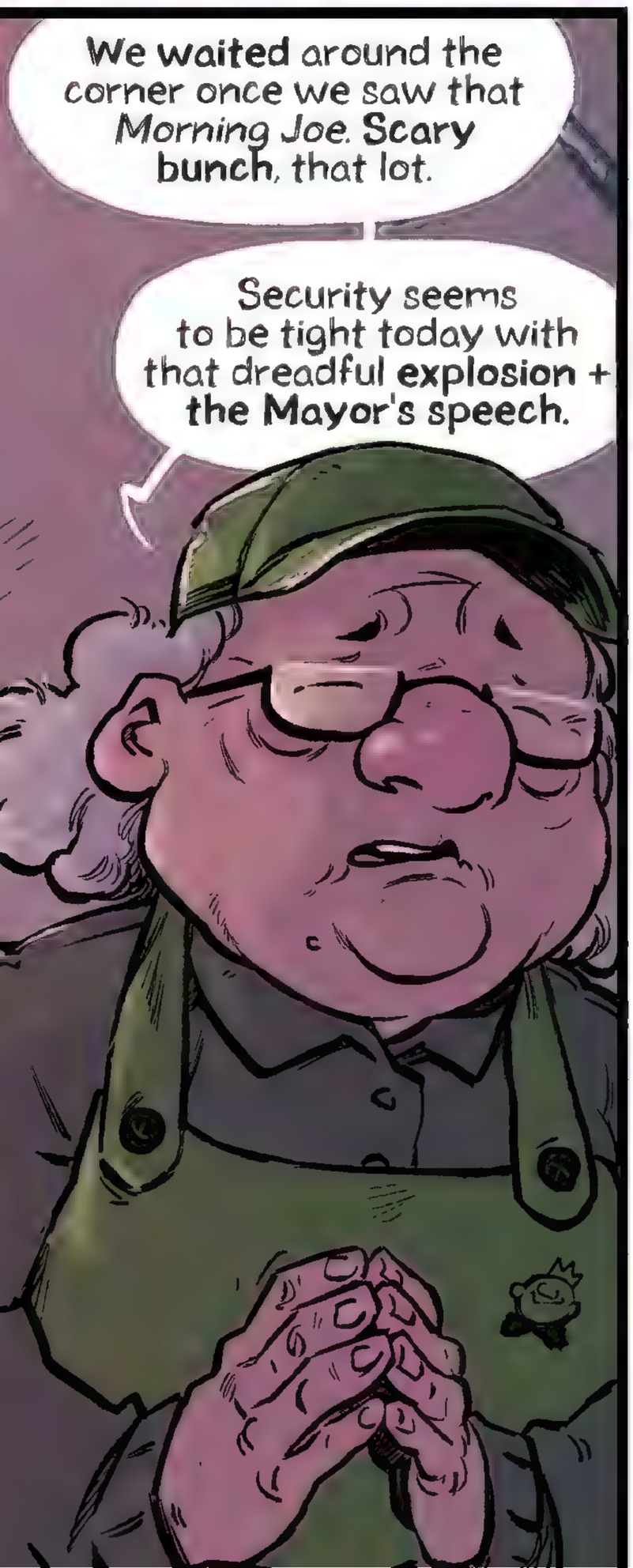
Bandit + Thatcher **NICE** people.

They feed me good food.

PLOUAH!

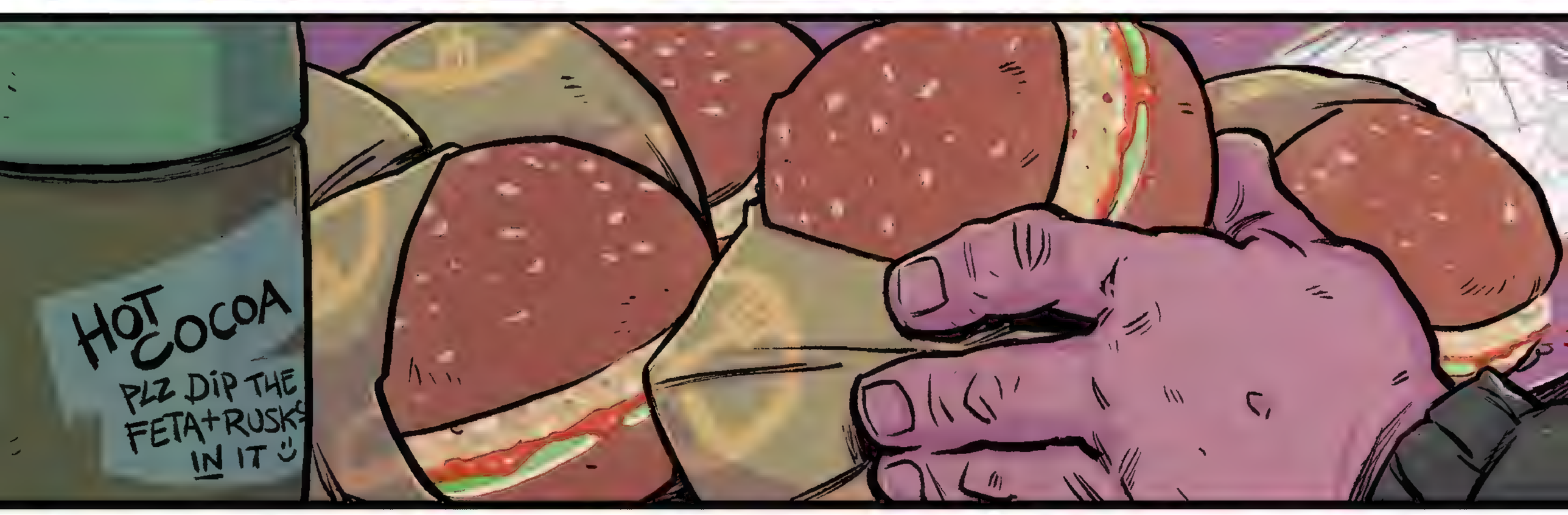



Hello. G'morning!
Are you open yet, Thatcher?
Yeah, sorry, looong night.


We waited around the corner once we saw that Morning Joe. Scary bunch, that lot.
Security seems to be tight today with that dreadful explosion + the Mayor's speech.

I'm sure it's fine. They just wanted mum to go in early today.
Good. You wouldn't happen to have any tasty selections this morning?
The festival options that are being pushed today are all fried and sweet, and you know it doesn't sit well with me.
We got you. Bandit is cooking right now!

Today we have a savory scrabbled egg sandwich with apricot jam and avocado.
And to warm the heart, I made some hot unsweetened cocoa with feta on the side.
Oh, that sounds lovely and easier on my tummy!

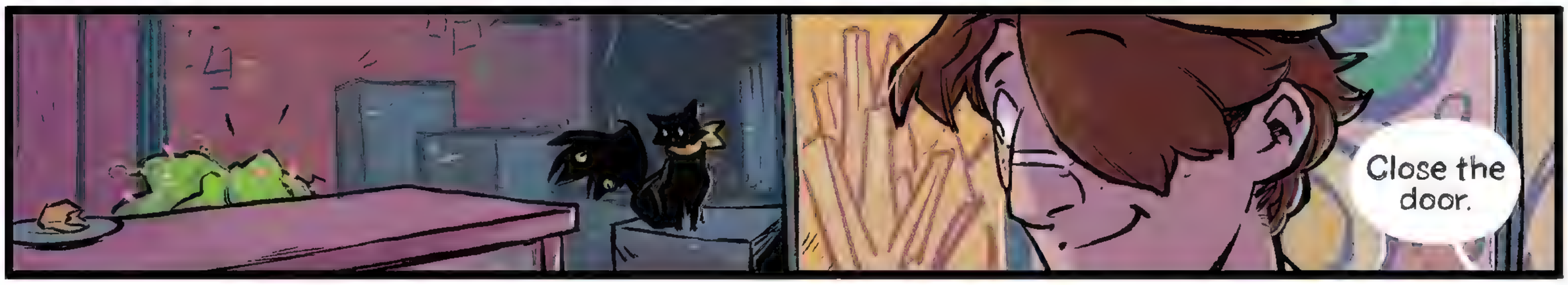

HOT COCOA
PLZ DIP THE FETA+RUSKS IN IT

Hey! Don't get caught now.
CHEF
We really appreciate this, B+T.

If you ever need anything just ask, OK? I know your mum can be too proud.
CHEF
But we are always here to help, as your dad did for us.

"You two are honestly doing the Guardian's work."

Hey! Sorry I'm late, my yaya wanted a **huge order** for her **big meeting!**
LEO! Finally, you're here!
Something **AMAZING** happened last night!
SODAPOP!
CHOCO
CHEF


Close the door.

What did **I** miss? Did **Spot** burp up a feather-ball again?
HEY ZAWA?
You wanna come out and meet our friend? **Leo** helps us deliver food to people who need it.

SOLD OUT

She's the Guardian.

SWEET!
Really? That's all you have to say?

Nice to meet you, almighty Guardian ZAWA!
Hi!

My yaya is a HUGE believer.
I've had this charm with me ever since I was a baby.

SEE PEOPLE!
WE NEED YOUR HELP

Are you sure this is a good idea?
CHEF

See MORE people. Need to know...
WANT to know more to help!

It'll be fine. We'll do a quick drive around town, no one will see her.

I suppose. I've got some cleaning and prepping to do. We can meet up in a few hours, then.

Might have to get her a **hat** or maybe **chuck** a **rug** over her, though.

I'll radio you later once we're done.

Don't **burn** the place down!

C'mon. I'll help out.

Yaya put in an order for **thirty meal boxes.**

WHAT!?

I still remember that order. I mean, what was she thinking? 30 meal boxes? Last time it was just a carrot cake.

Anyway, my sister and Zawa drove down to the city center so that they could get a **better understanding** of the people of Mesa's Boon.

Thatcher was being **risky**, but Zawa had only experienced us and the horrible guards that had her locked up.

We asked for her help...

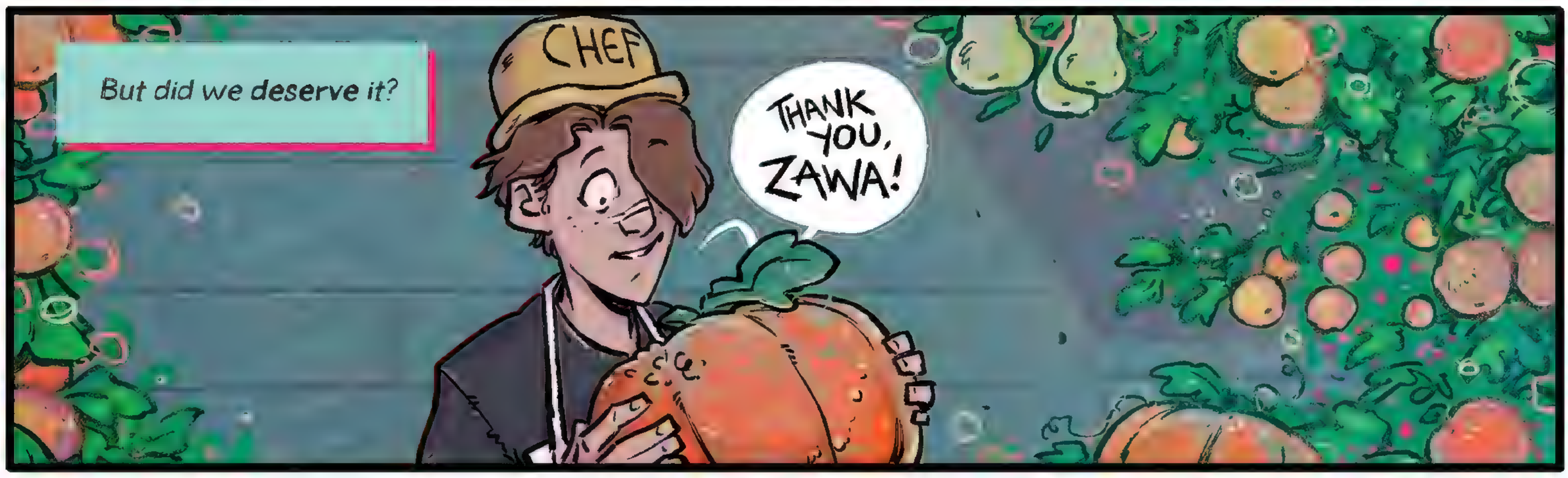
...but she didn't know **who** was in need.

Zawa? I know I might have been a little sudden to spring that **wish doll** on you last night, BUT as you can see I wasn't being selfish.
I honestly thought you were *just* a tale that was told every year to drive up the sales of the city's products.

Your image is **plastered** everywhere, and many people look to that image for help and guidance in dire times.
Maybe it was cynical of me, but now that I know, I think **YOU** are the **real change** that we need to stop him.

Going up to see if there's anything I can still use.
CHEF

*Her gift could save **thousands**.*



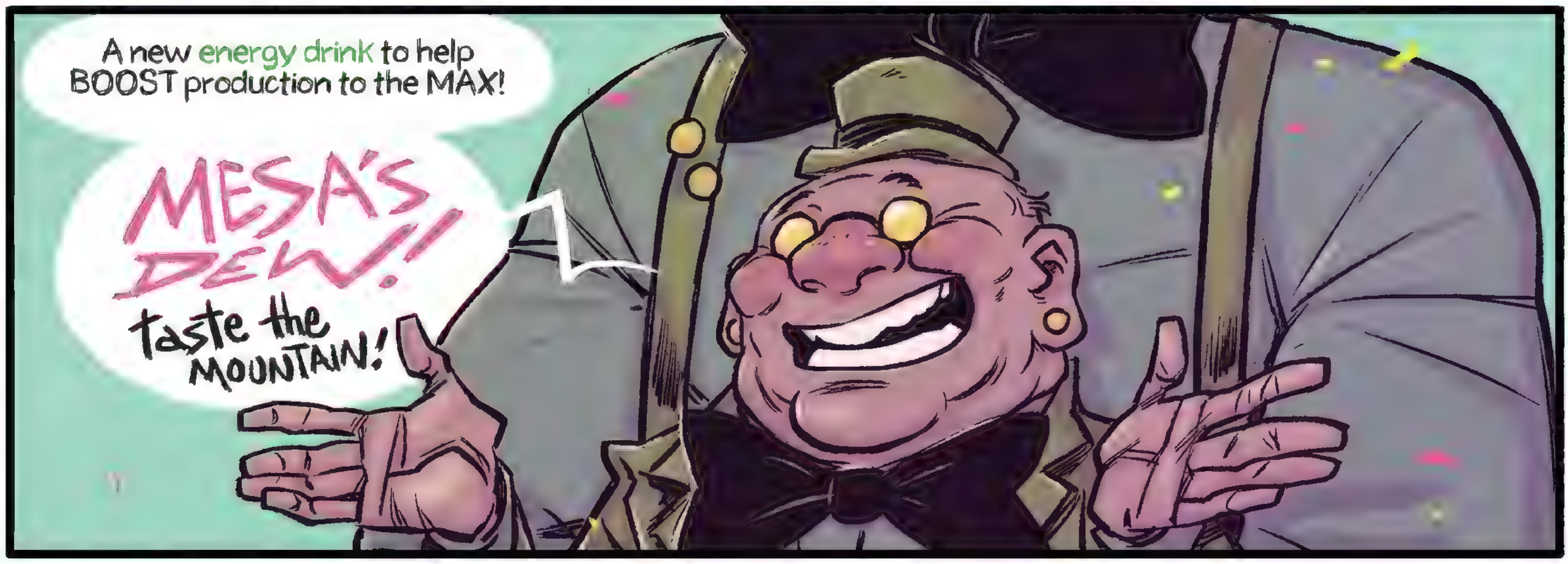
As you all know, there was an **incident** last night at the factory. But fret not, everything is peachy, the **Divine Feast** is upon us--and to add to the celebrations, **I** can now announce a wonderful deal with our neighboring islands.

We have been chosen to help them out with their nutritious needs, and their representatives will arrive tonight to put pen to paper.

AAAND our holy Mountain has blessed us with a beautiful gift to help the deal go through.

taste the MOUNTAIN!

taste the MOUNTAIN!



Look here at the POWER it has granted Lola!

Lifting boxes will be yesterday's problem.

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!

Heck, you can lift one of our trademarked *Mesa's Automated Selling Machines*™ if you wanted.

We have truly been BLESSED this year!

Our Mountain has delivered us a **prosperous** opportunity and the power to fulfill it!
Now let's make this year's **Divine Feast** the best we've ever had!
This deal will bring us a literal **mountain load** of money!
FOR EVERY-ONE!

Get me out of here.

Now let's keep the party going!
Our guests will be arriving later, so we'll need to work **HARDER, FASTER + STRONGER!**

FOR THE MOUNTAIN!

And for the biggest deal in the world!
Who cares about the food when the real money is sourcing the **Mountain's blood**.

Make sure the **drilling** doesn't stop, not even for a moment.
we need to get as **much of it as possible** before the investors show up.
Also, that **freaky guardian** is still on the loose...

*"...and the last thing we need is to deal with **another one**."*

"Mesa's Dew," what kind of stupid name is that?
Where is it!?

I mean, I understand the sales angle of putting "a new product for the people!" on the market, but I'm sure if any human drank this they would probably **explode** like a pyrework.

TSF!

QWK
QWK

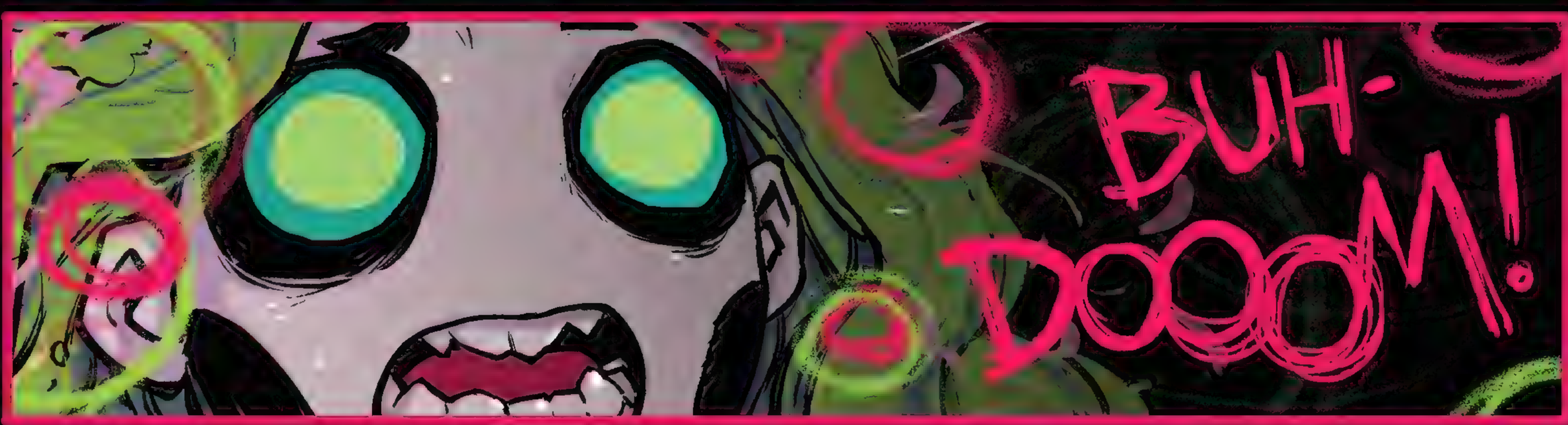
This so-called "dew" we've been draining has its **magical** properties for sure--especially with **fertilizing** the crops and promoting extraordinary **growth.**
But there's only **one** thing worth all the hassle...

...and that's just to hurt you, ZAWA.

You know I've had it with these little talks.
Just tell me where the source is so we can be over.

The very sight of you sickens me.
Where's.
THE.
HEART.

Spit it out.
BUH-DOOM.


BUH-DOOM!

STOP TAUNTING ME!

Never. HA!

Mrs. Blackbird? Got a moment?

What.

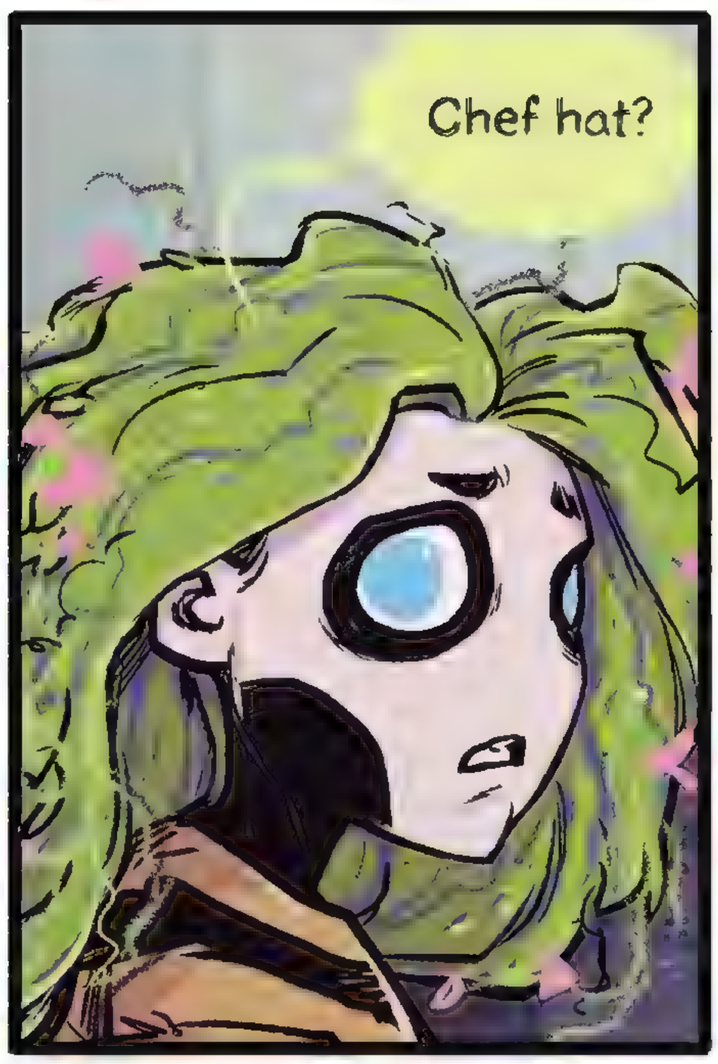
The drill site has gone off-line.

But I think they might have FOUND it, ma'am.

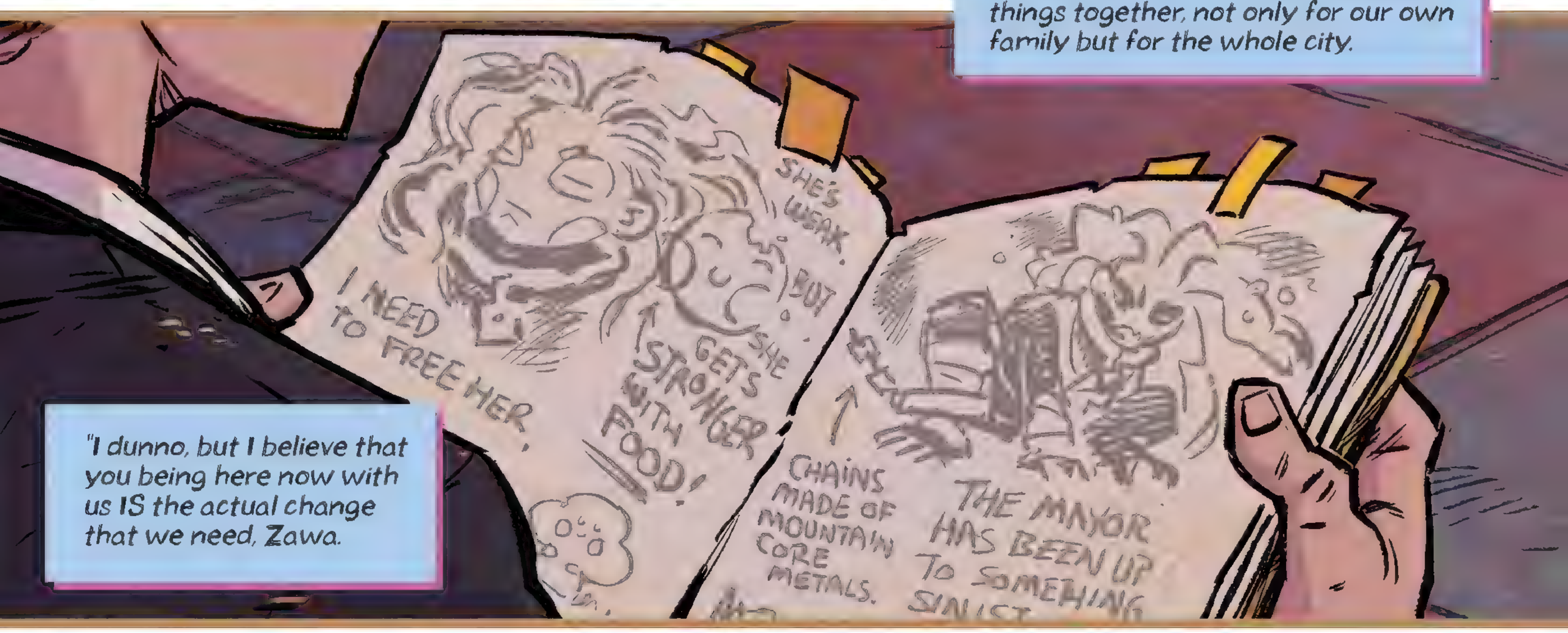
"Get an escort ready. I'll head there personally."

DESOLATION.

You OK back there?
Wow, your hair is getting really long and green, huh?
Lemme fix that.
I know this must have been a lot to hear.
I really wanted to show you what has happened to us since you've been gone.
The city always seems to have a lot of color around this time of the year, but things just seem to be worse for everyone.
A lot of them believe in you and believe that the Mayor is the Mountain's prophet while you are "sleeping," but we know that isn't true.
I don't know if it's just me letting my baggage drag me down, but I keep realizing that things started to go south for us just after dad...

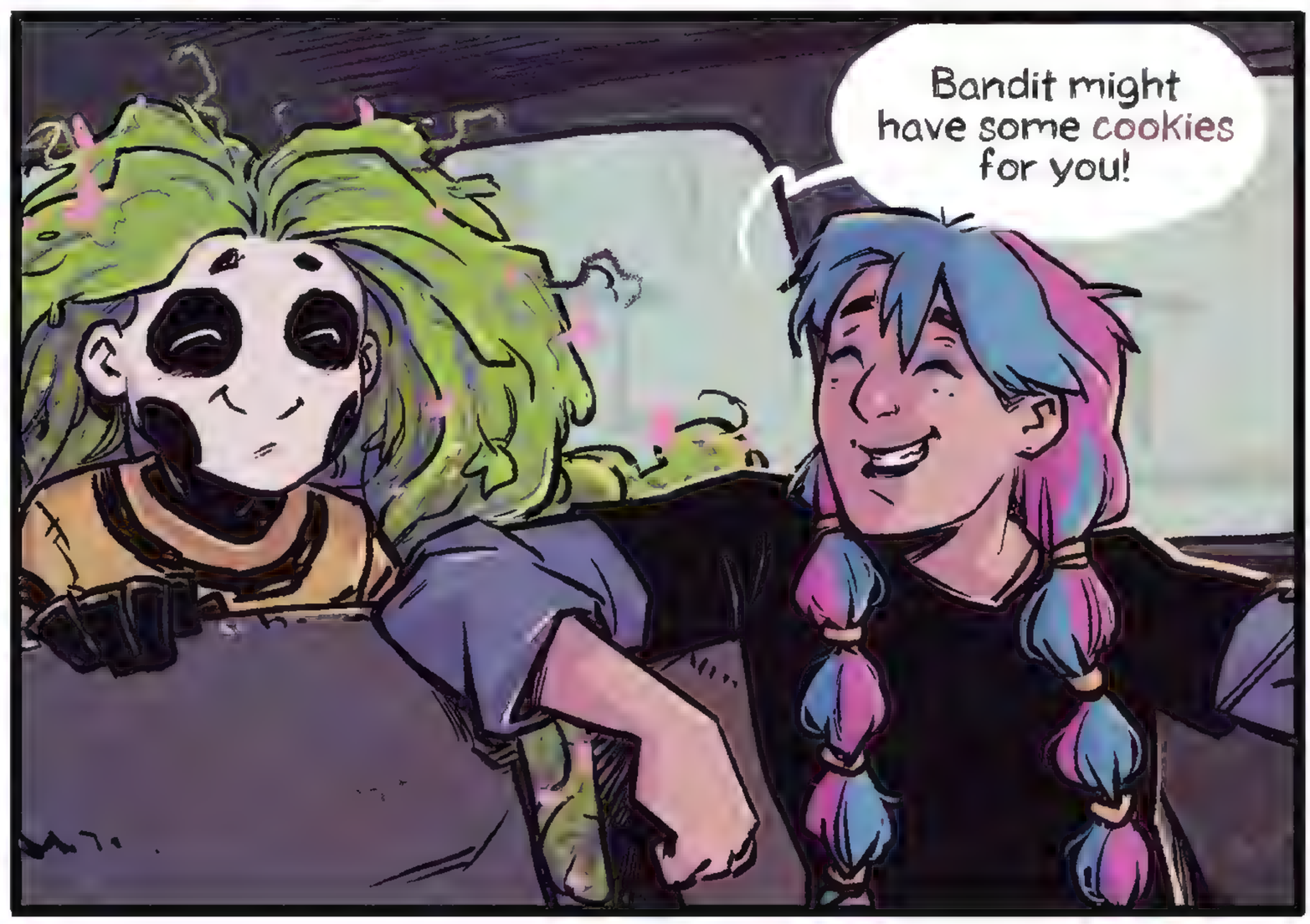

Chef hat?

"Yeah, Bandit likes to wear his hat.
CHEF
"It's like he was the thread keeping things together, not only for our own family but for the whole city.


I NEED TO FREE HER.
SHE'S WEAK. BUT SHE GETS STRONGER WITH FOOD!
CHAINS MADE OF MOUNTAIN CORE METALS.
THE MAYOR HAS BEEN UP TO SOMETHING SINIST
"I dunno, but I believe that you being here now with us IS the actual change that we need, Zawa.

"It's just the Mayor and his goons that are in the way."

There. Now let's go find the others, OK?


Bandit might have some cookies for you!

"COO-KIES!"

"Yeah, you seem a little pale, you must be **starved**, haha!"

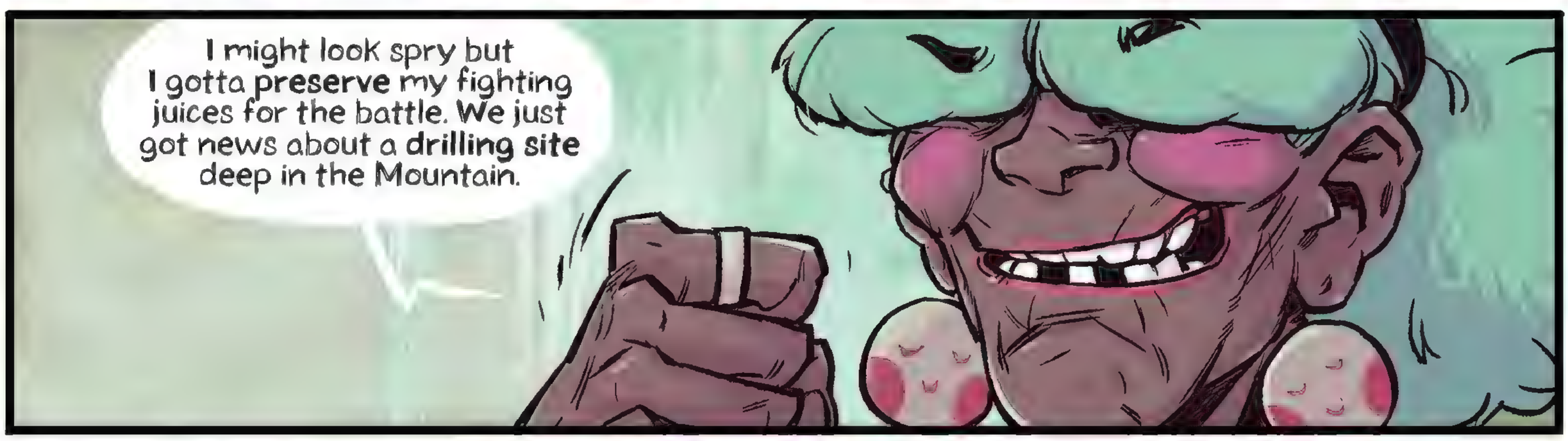
I always knew that **Leo's** grandmother was a tough cookie, but I never knew that she was running a **secret resistance group** from an old, closed-down fishing shop outside of the city.

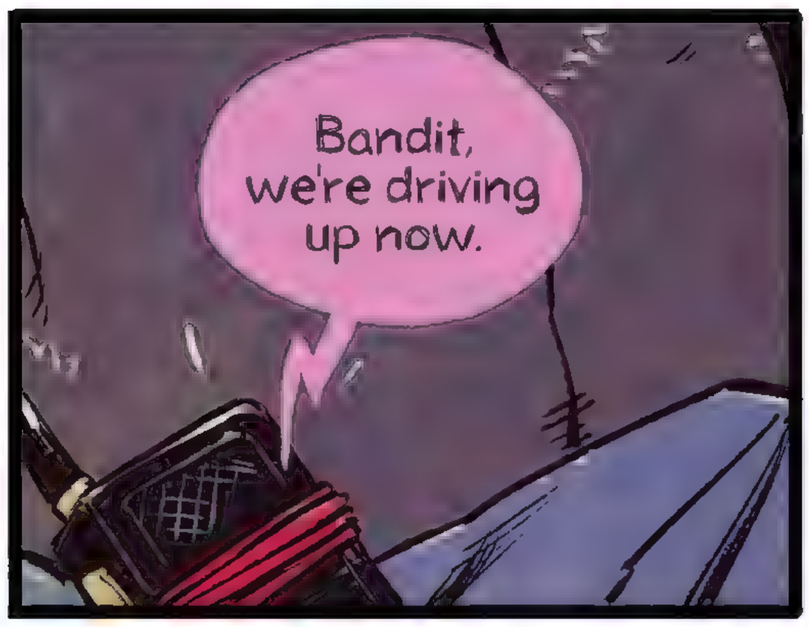
They had meetings every Thursday night and the occasional birthday party where I made the cake.

In hindsight, we should have told her that we were bringing a **guest**.

Hey hey! Yaya, we got the grub for those bellies!
Thank you, darlings!

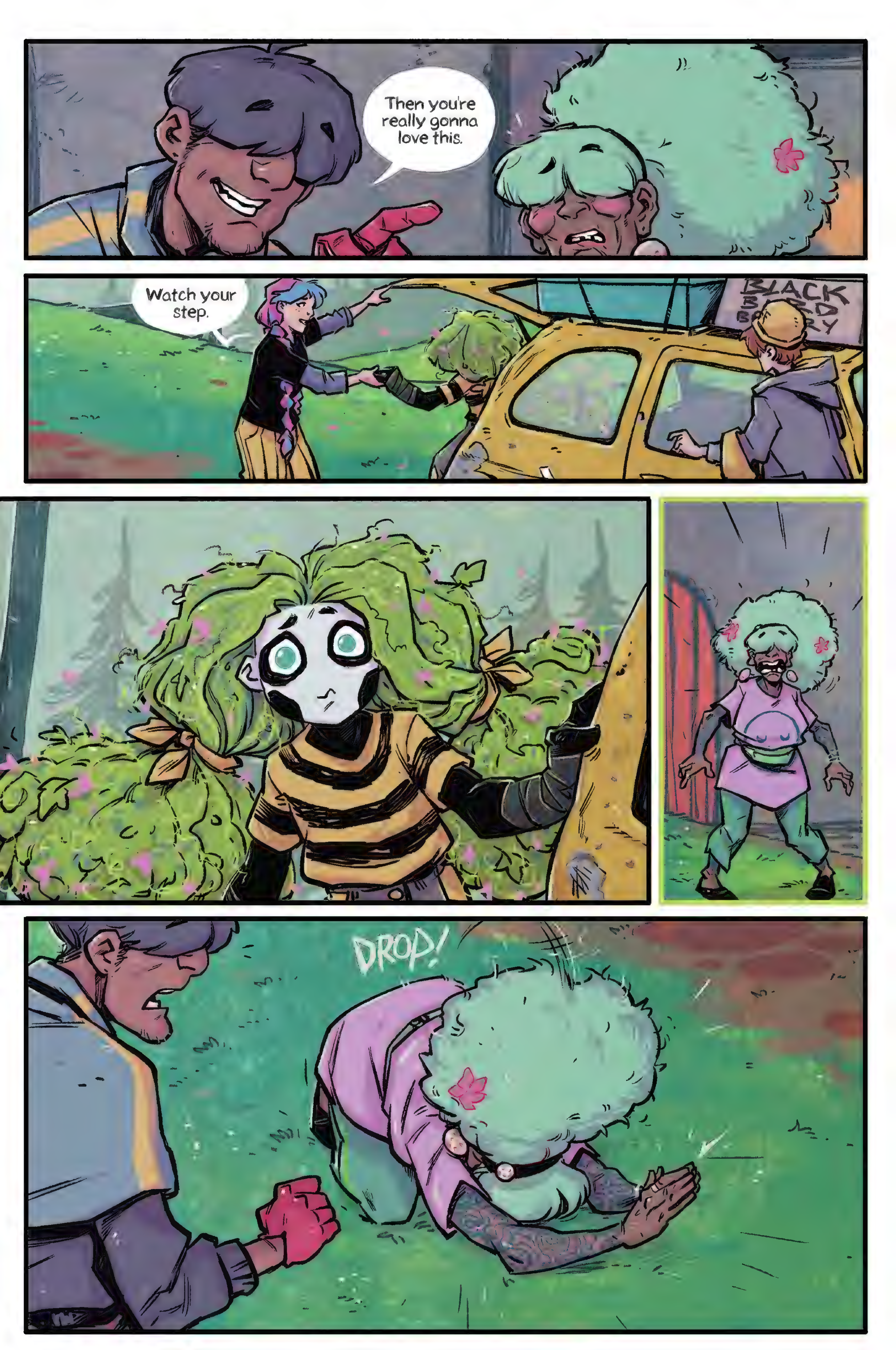
C'mere you, get the bags, they look heavy.


I might look spry but I gotta **preserve** my fighting juices for the battle. We just got news about a **drilling site** deep in the Mountain.

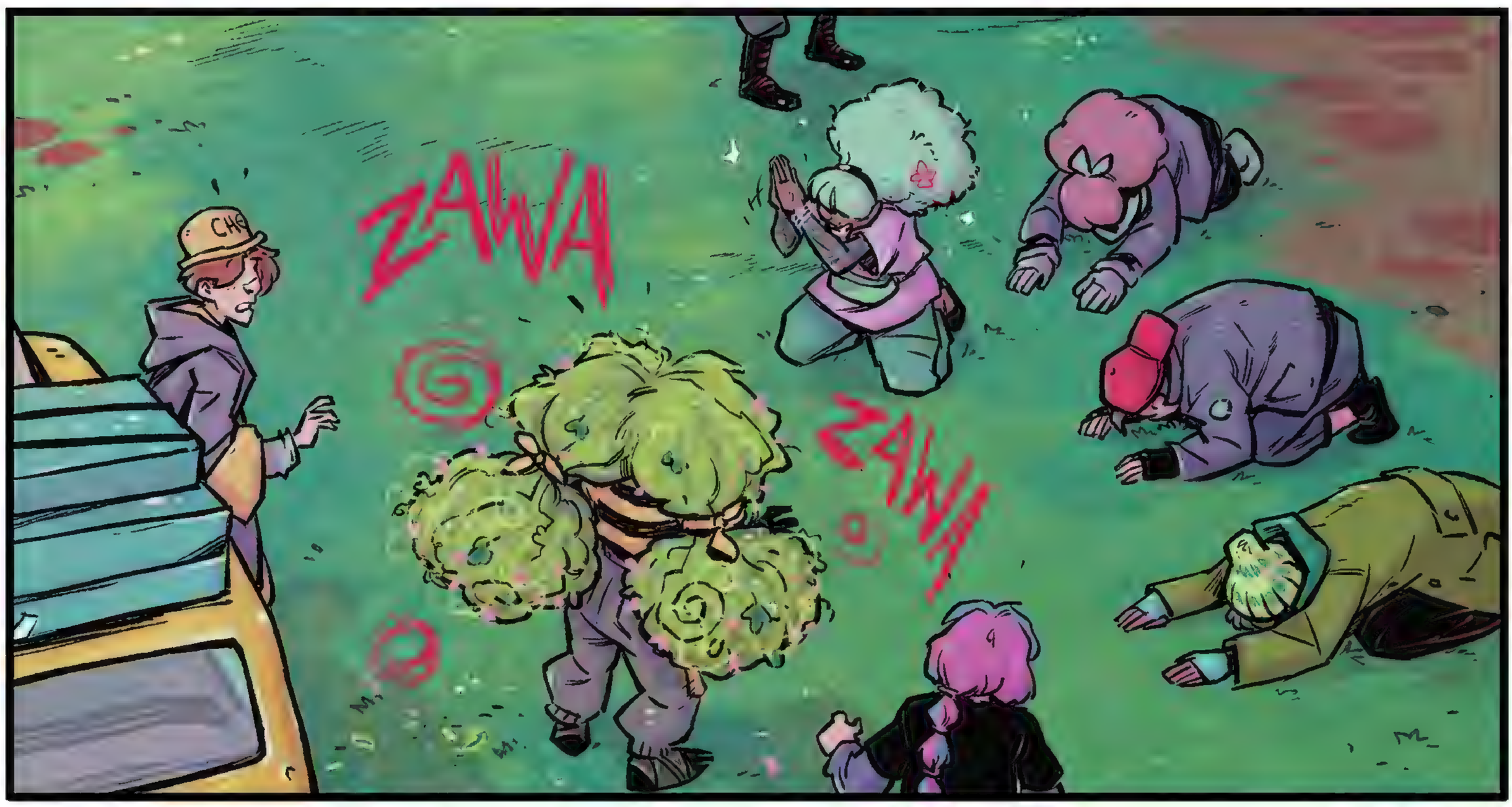

Bandit, we're driving up now.

CHEF
My sis is arriving too.
Sweet. Thatcher's gonna love this.

I have big plans to **KICK BUTT**.


Then you're really gonna love this.
Watch your step.
BLACK
DROP!

Yaya?
ZAWA HAS APPEARED!!
My prayers have been answered!
ZAWA?
What, really?

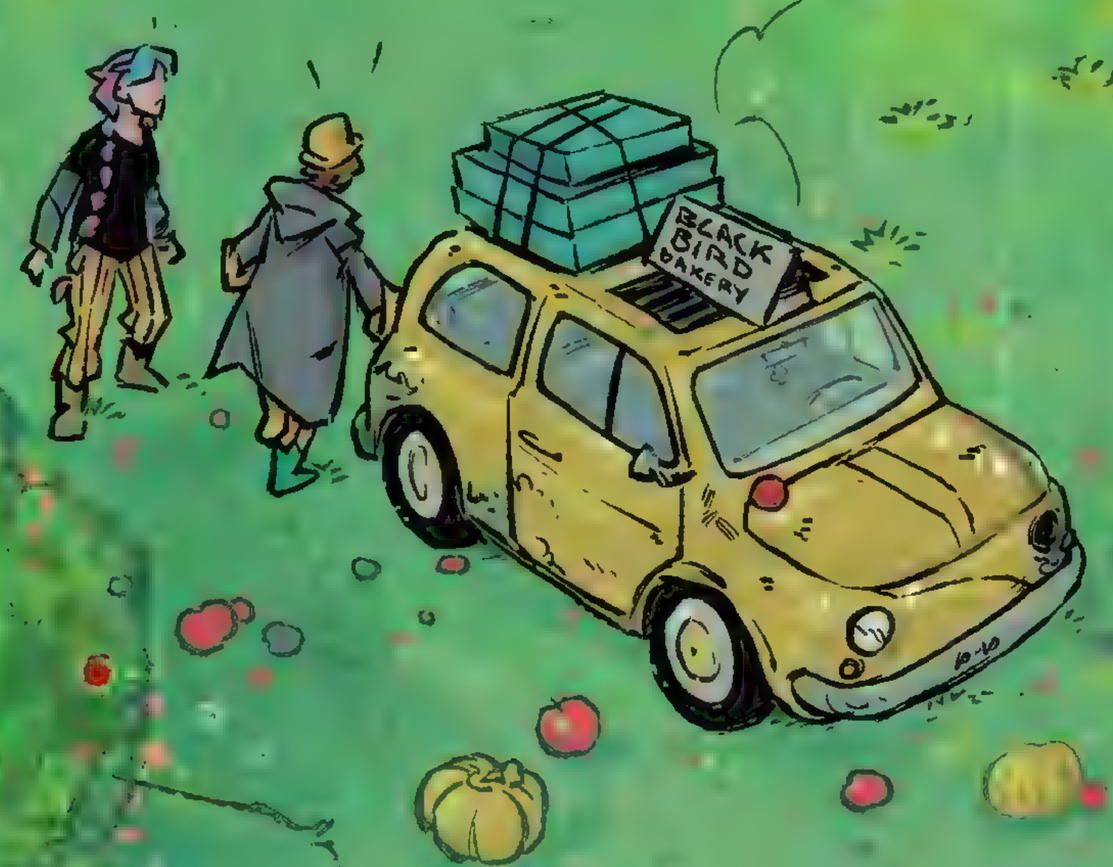

ZAWA
ZAWA

ZAWA!
Dee-STROY THEM!!
SAVE U.S.

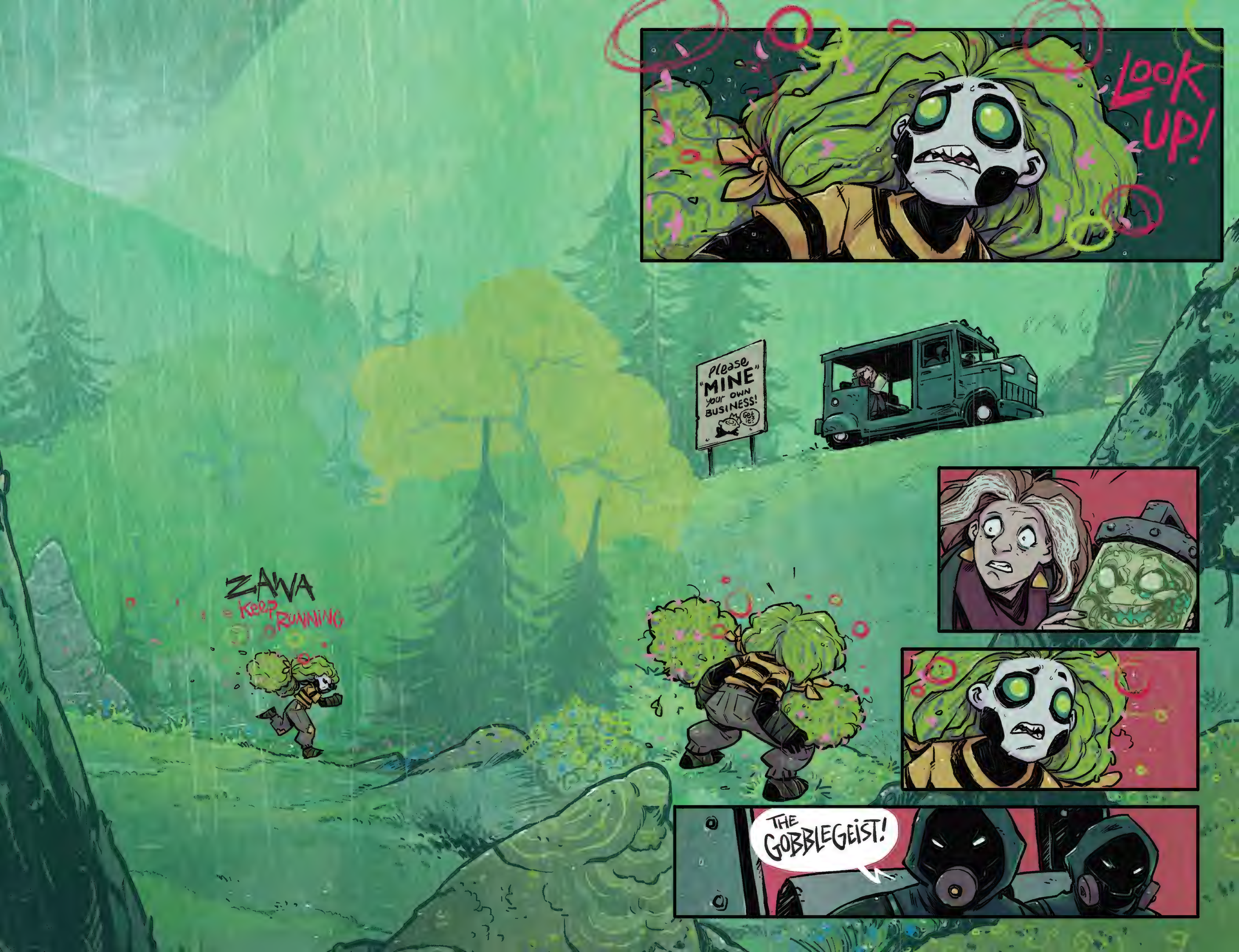
WRETCH!
RUMBLE!!
BLACK BIRD BAKERY

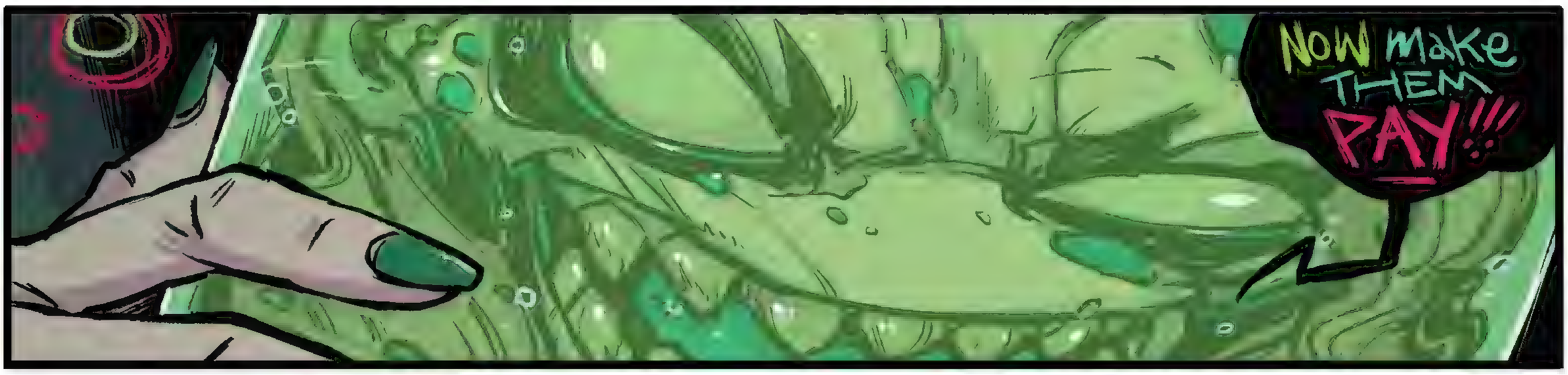
Yeah, that's right, the Guardian ***puked up*** *a cornucopia of fruit + vegetables and left us in the rain.*

At that moment I didn't know if I was ever going to see Zawa again, but thank the Mountain that Belle went after her.



What happened next, though, changed EVERYTHING.


LOOK UP!
Please "MINE" your OWN BUSINESS! Get it?
ZAWA
KEEP RUNNING
THE GOBBLEGEIST!


Now make THEM PAY!!!

BZZZ
TSF
wha--?

KAAAAAA!!
TOOF TOOF

TOOF

ROOF!

SNARL!
STOP!

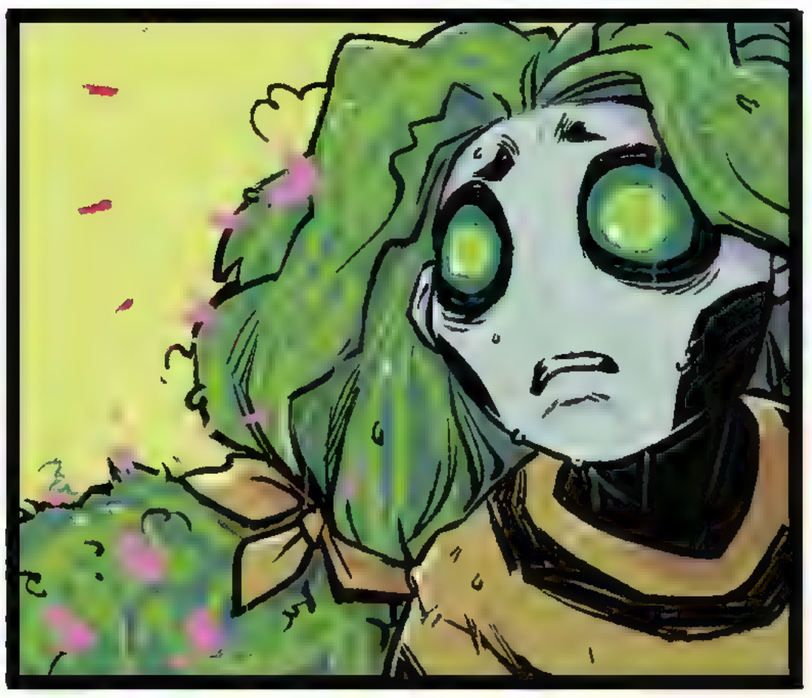
DON'T MOVE!
What's going on?
BZZ!

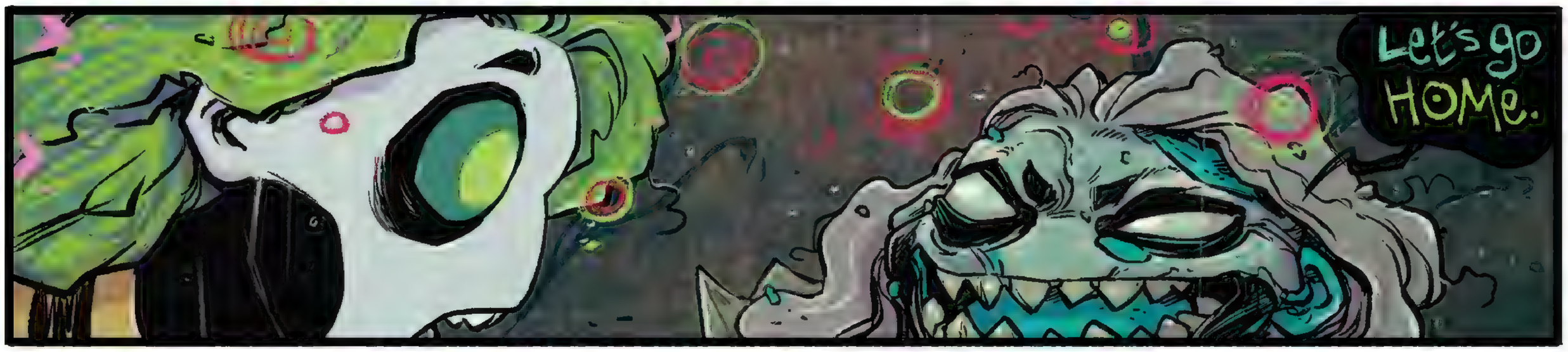
KO!

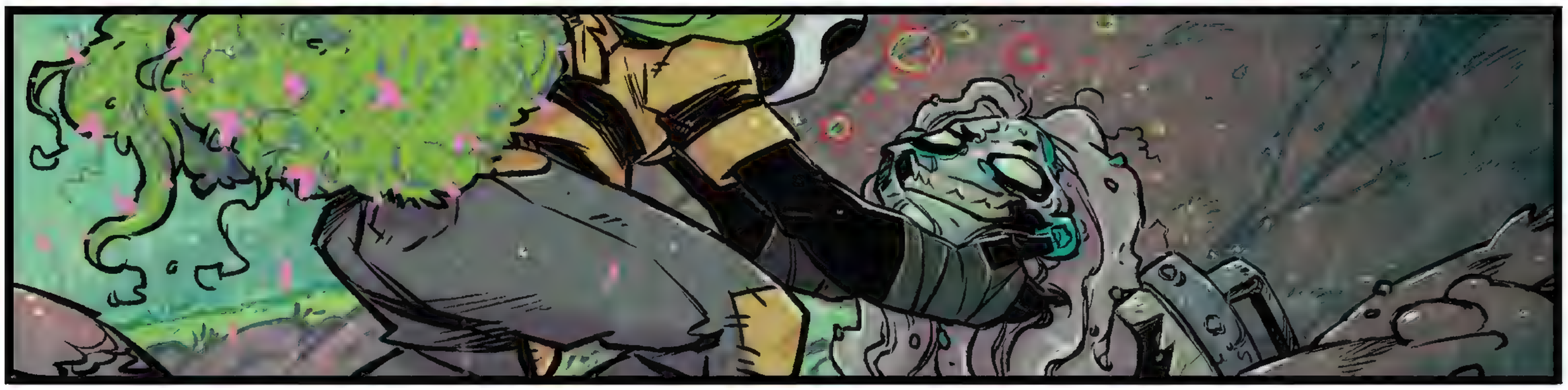
ZAWA! set us FREE

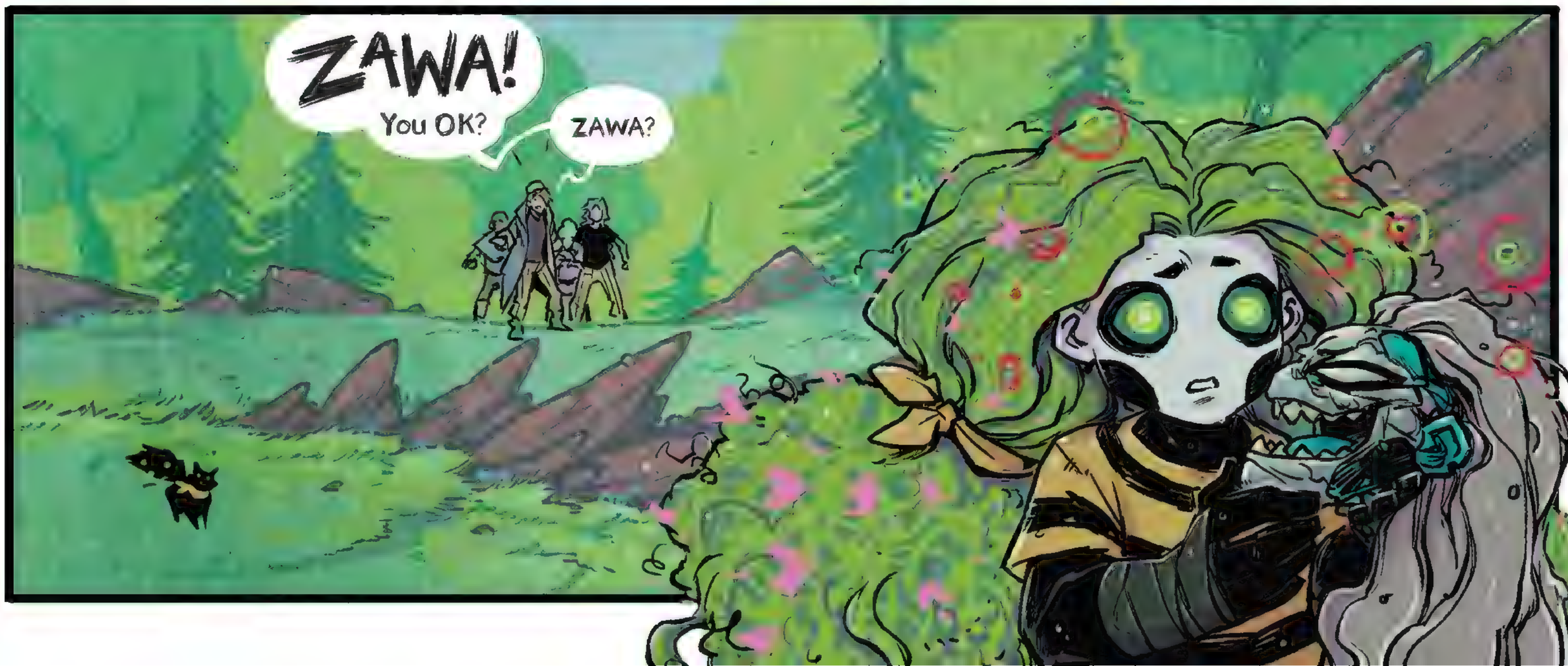
KRK

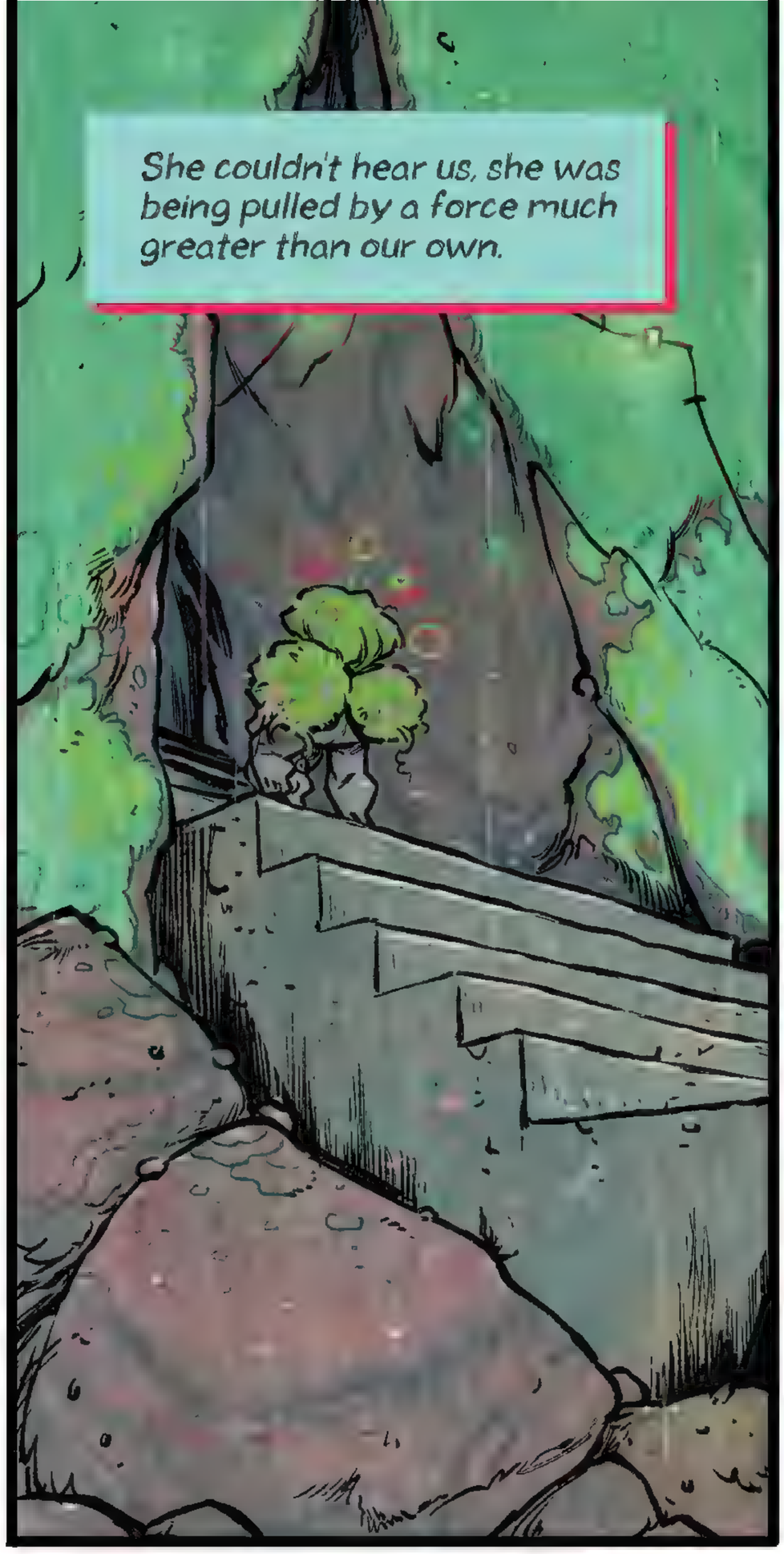
NIA!

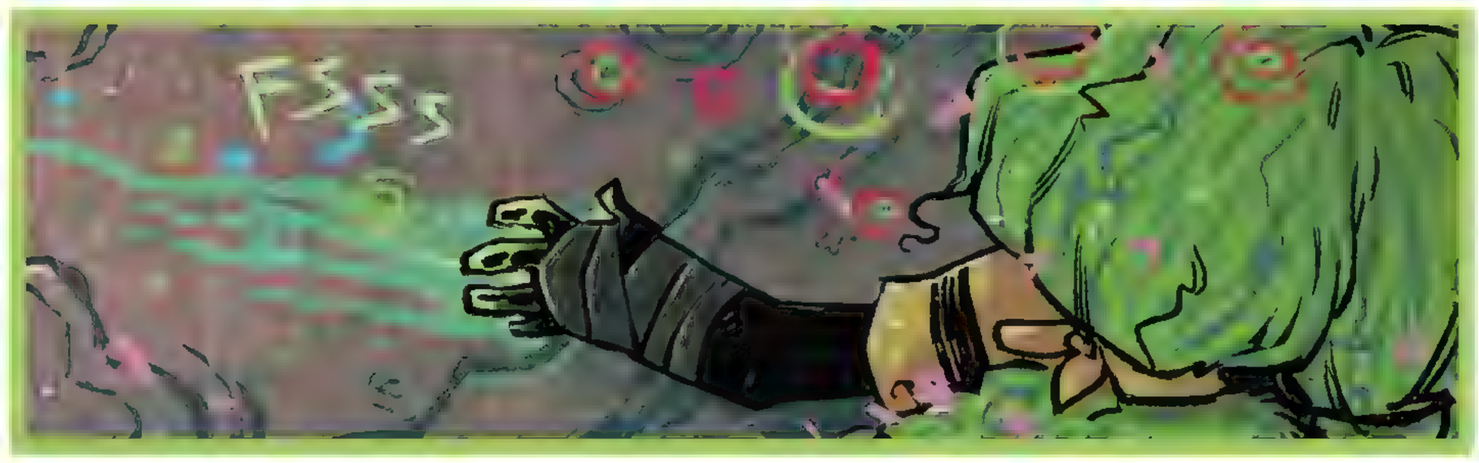



Let's go HOME.

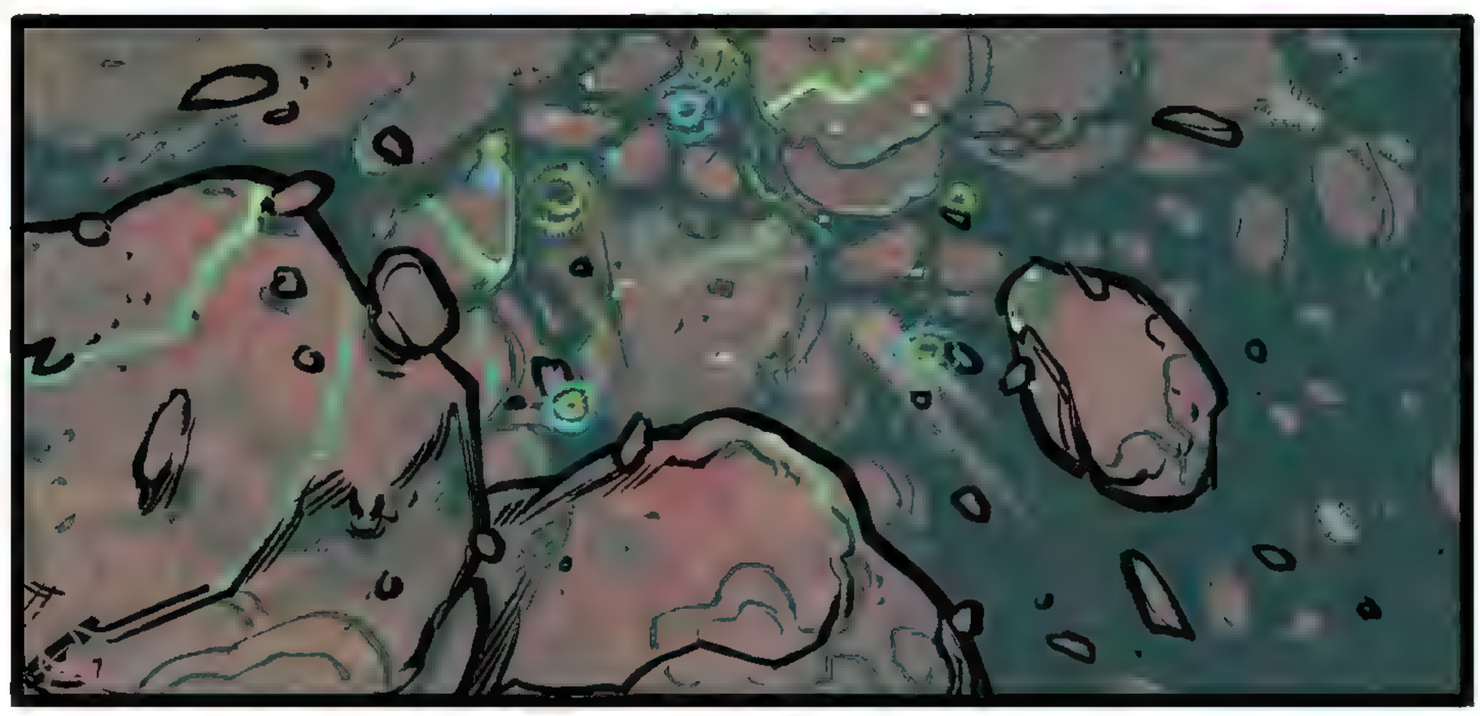



ZAWA!
You OK?
ZAWA?


She couldn't hear us, she was being pulled by a force much greater than our own.


FSSS

CHEF



RUMBLE!!!

None of us could fathom what was going to happen to Mesa's Boon that day.

No no no.

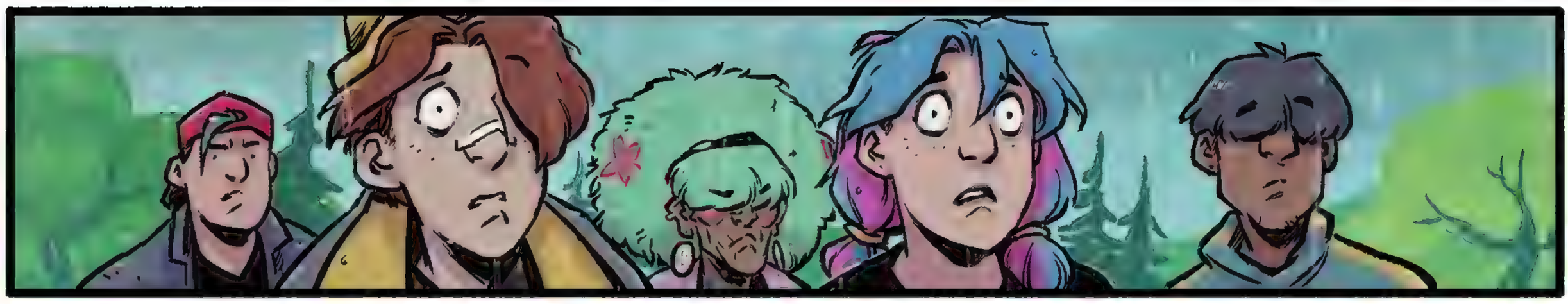
Another one? And it's taken the head.

MUM?!

Kids, you have no idea how bad this is.
That monster is gonna be the end of us!

Wait, Mum, you're wrong! She's not a monster! The Mayor has been lying to us about the sleeping Guardian. He had her chained up all this time.

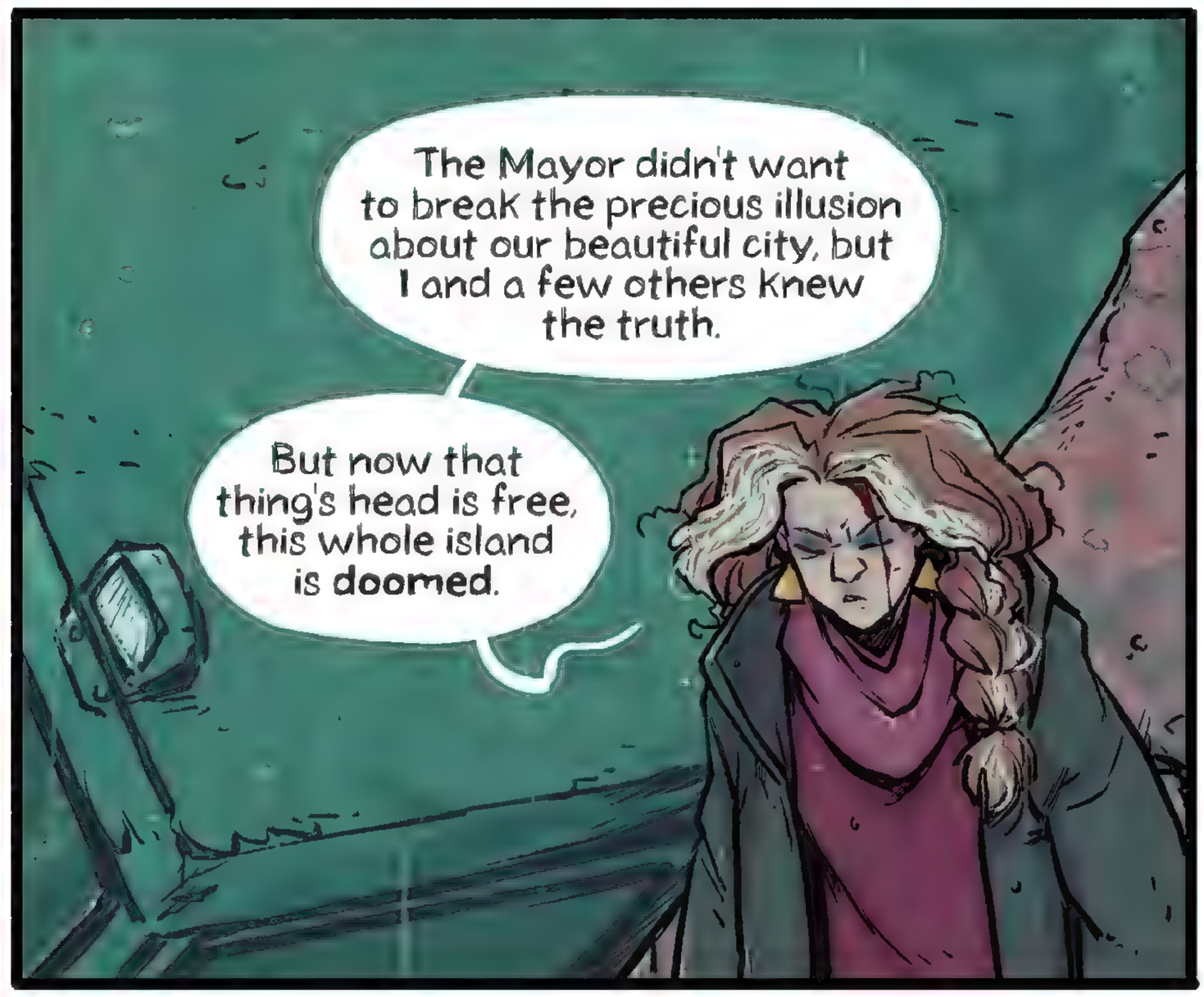
BANDIT. I KNOW!



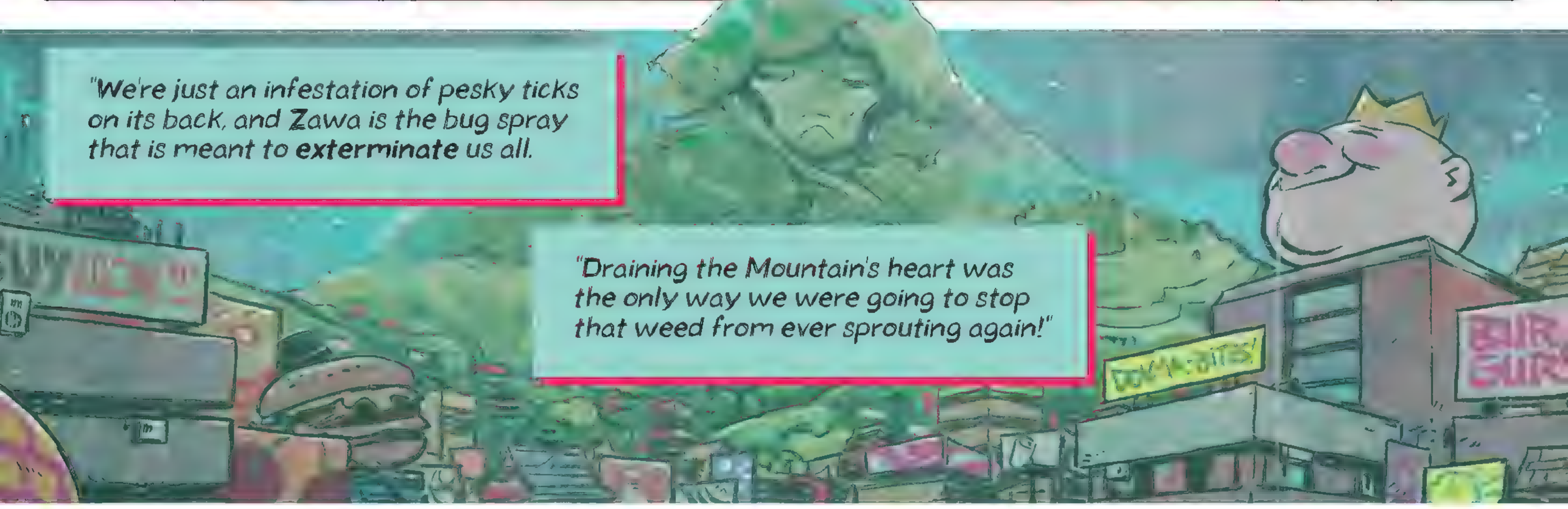
Zawa has always been important to all of us growing up.
The great Guardian that provides us with all its Mountain's resources.
Sounds like a **wonderful fairy tale**, but it was just a lie.

Zawa is nothing but a **terrible beast** that has plagued our people for decades, but your father thought otherwise.
And guess what? That got him **killed**.
Your Guardian Zawa killed him, and I've been trying to **protect you** ever since.

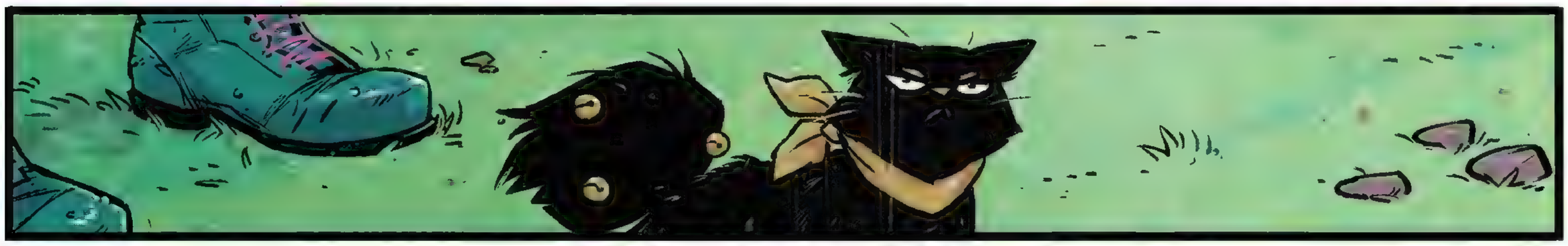
But Dad was trying to help Zawa.
What is this **nonsense**, Blackbird?
It's **not** nonsense.


The Mayor didn't want to break the precious illusion about our beautiful city, but I and a few others knew the truth.
But now that thing's head is free, this whole island is **doomed**.

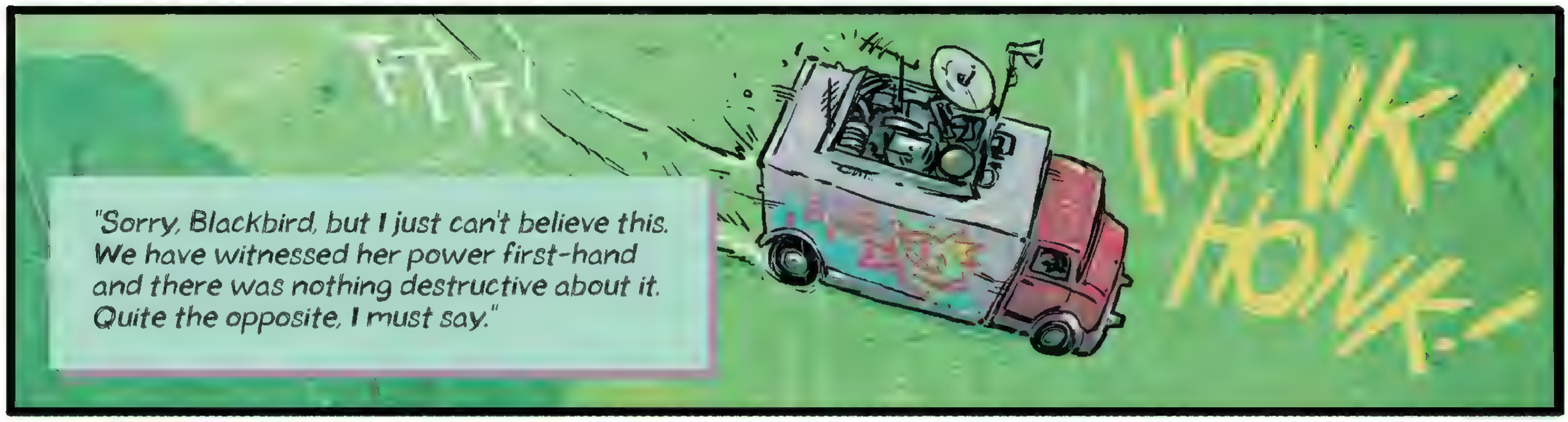
What are you talking about? Zawa is our savior!
ZAWA IS A PLAGUE!!
IT doesn't want us here.
The Mountain NEVER wanted us here!


"We're just an infestation of pesky ticks on its back, and Zawa is the bug spray that is meant to **exterminate** us all.
"Draining the Mountain's heart was the only way we were going to stop that weed from ever sprouting again!"

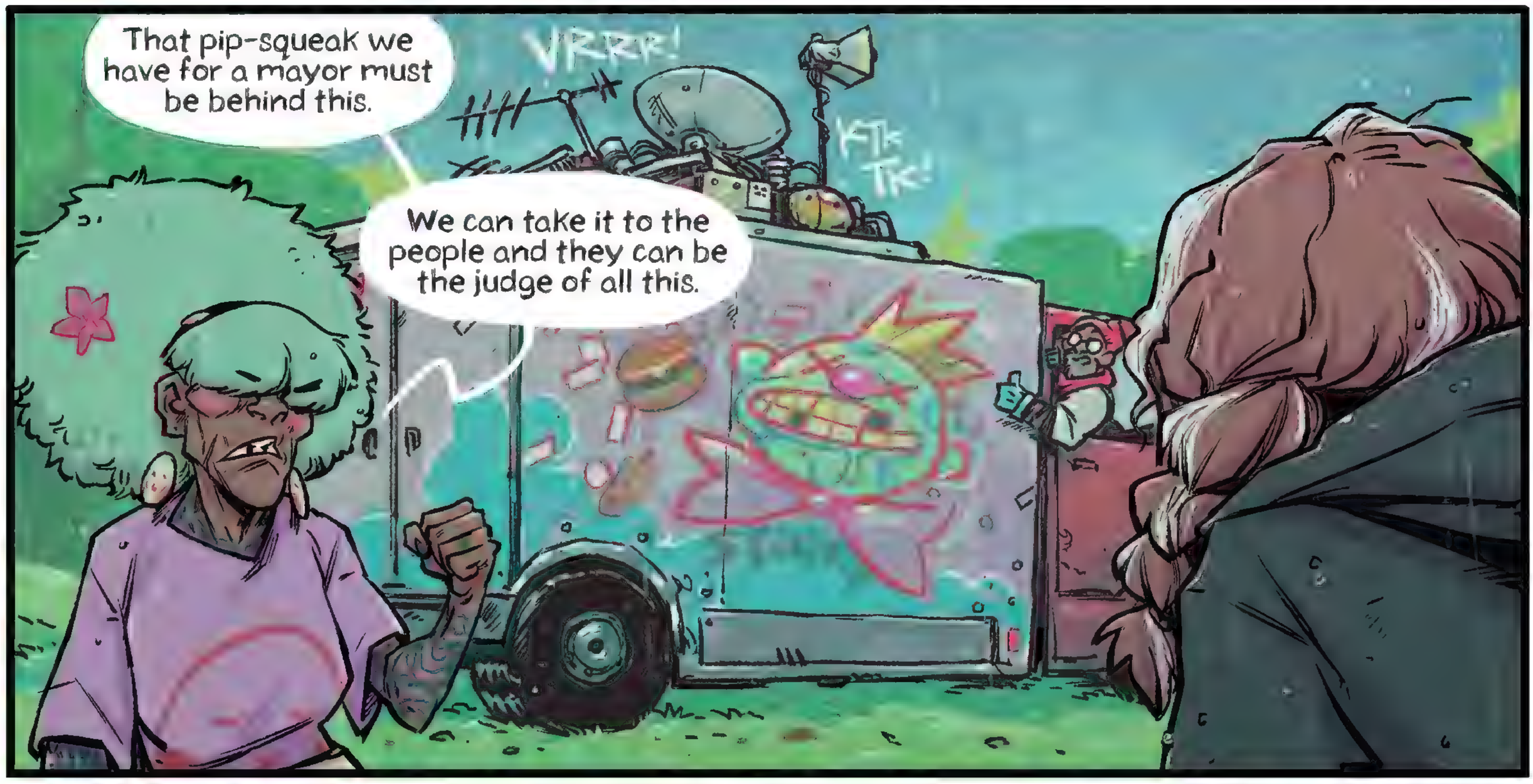
What are you saying, Mum? You mean you've been hurting the Mountain purposely all this time?
CHEF
What about that energy drink you've been working on?

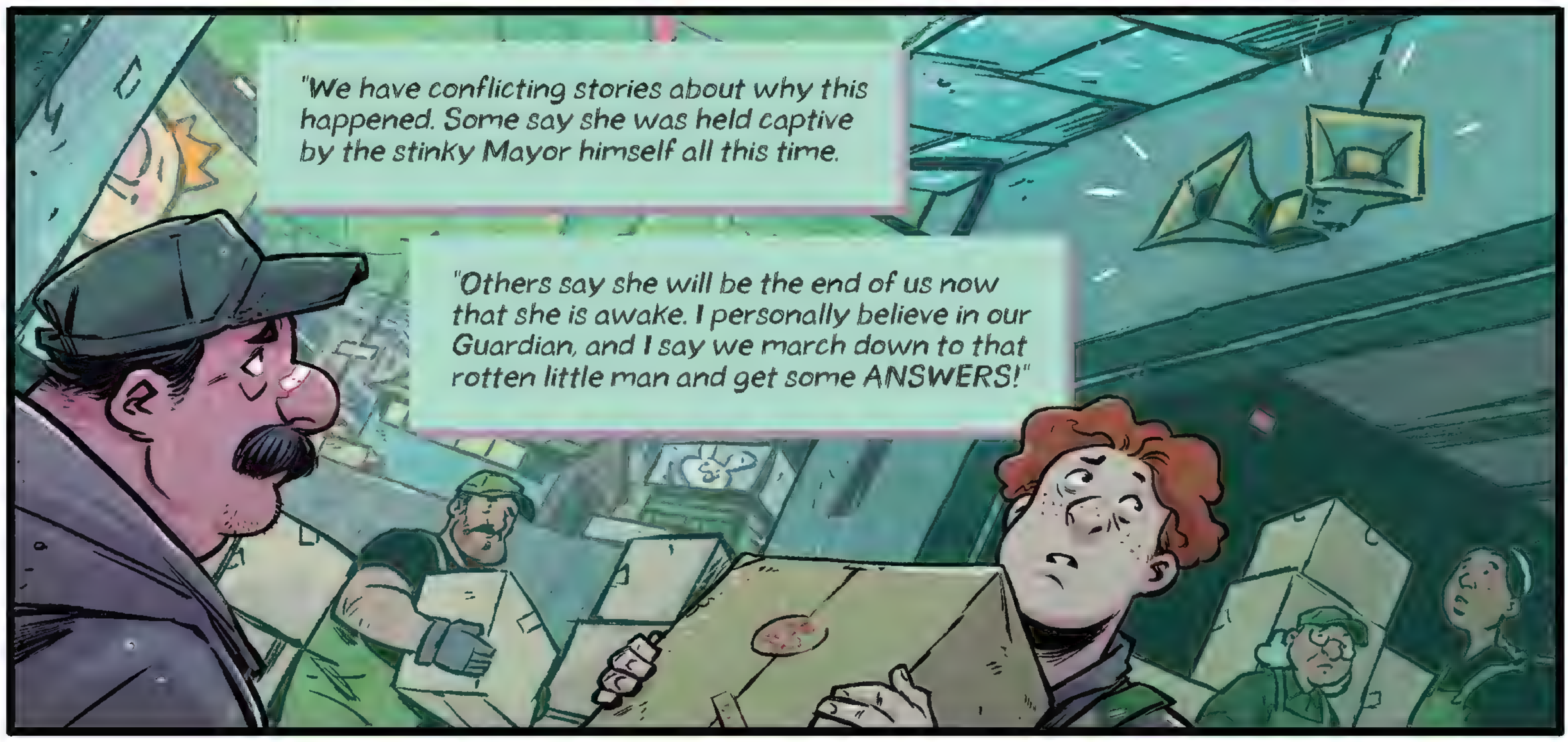


The drink was a **front**, kids. It was always about putting a stop to Zawa and making this place safer for us.



"Sorry, Blackbird, but I just can't believe this. We have witnessed her power first-hand and there was nothing destructive about it. Quite the opposite, I must say."





"If you are with us, meet us at the gates!"

BUY local!!!

NEED A BREAK?

KOKALO KOLA

Where am I?

Humans had been poisoning us for so long, stealing our blood and keeping the connection with our home severed. Now that you are free, though, we can become whole again, like before.

Like before?

WE WERE BORN FROM THE MOUNTAIN

Young and unaware of the DANGERS of this world, we lived free in her shadow.

Until people arrived on our island.
They tricked us with sweet and savory goods.
Convincing us to let them stay.
We were foolish to accept.

Because after that, they never stopped building and building and building.
STORE
Demanding even more from us as they spread like LOCUSTS.
Tearing down our beautiful landscapes.
And DESTROYING US in the process.

What?!

Exactly.

Now keep walking, we're nearly there.

They thought they had gotten rid of us.

They schemed and lied about our disappearance.

But their king underestimated us and thought he could just claim the island for himself.

What a fool.

My name is **Bandit Blackbird**, my dad cared for this town so much.

He also cared about Zawa, and found out that the Mayor had her **locked up**! She was **never** asleep!

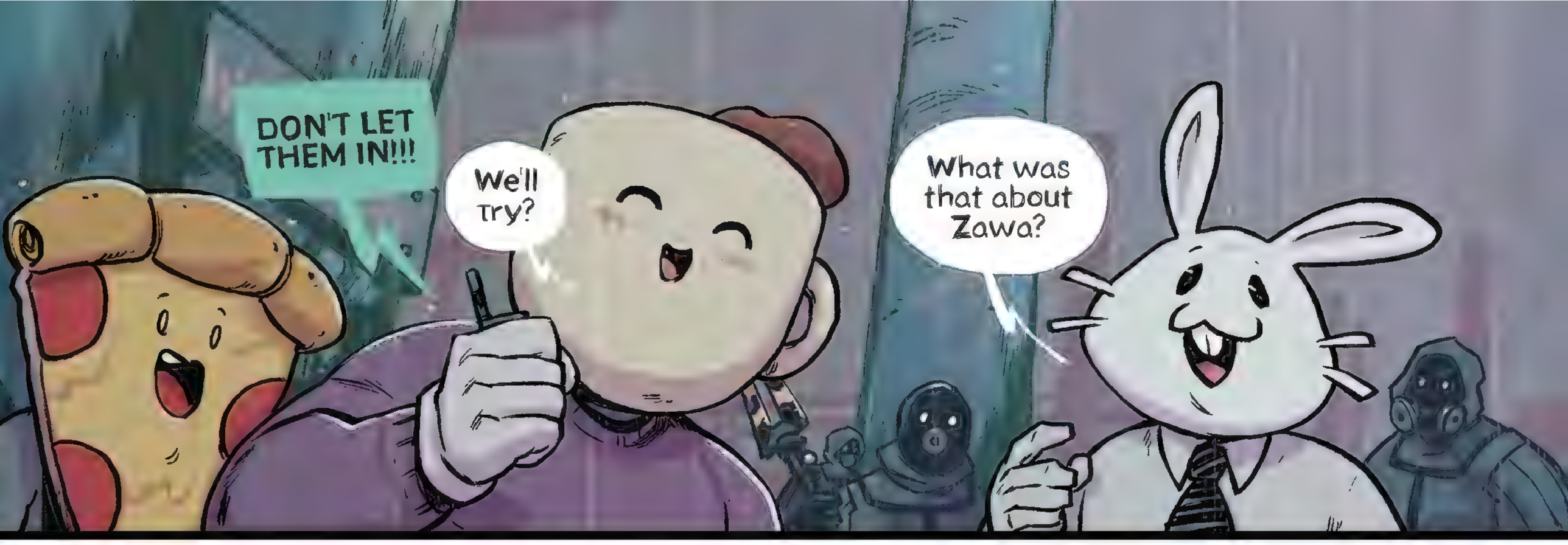
The Mayor has been **lying** to us!

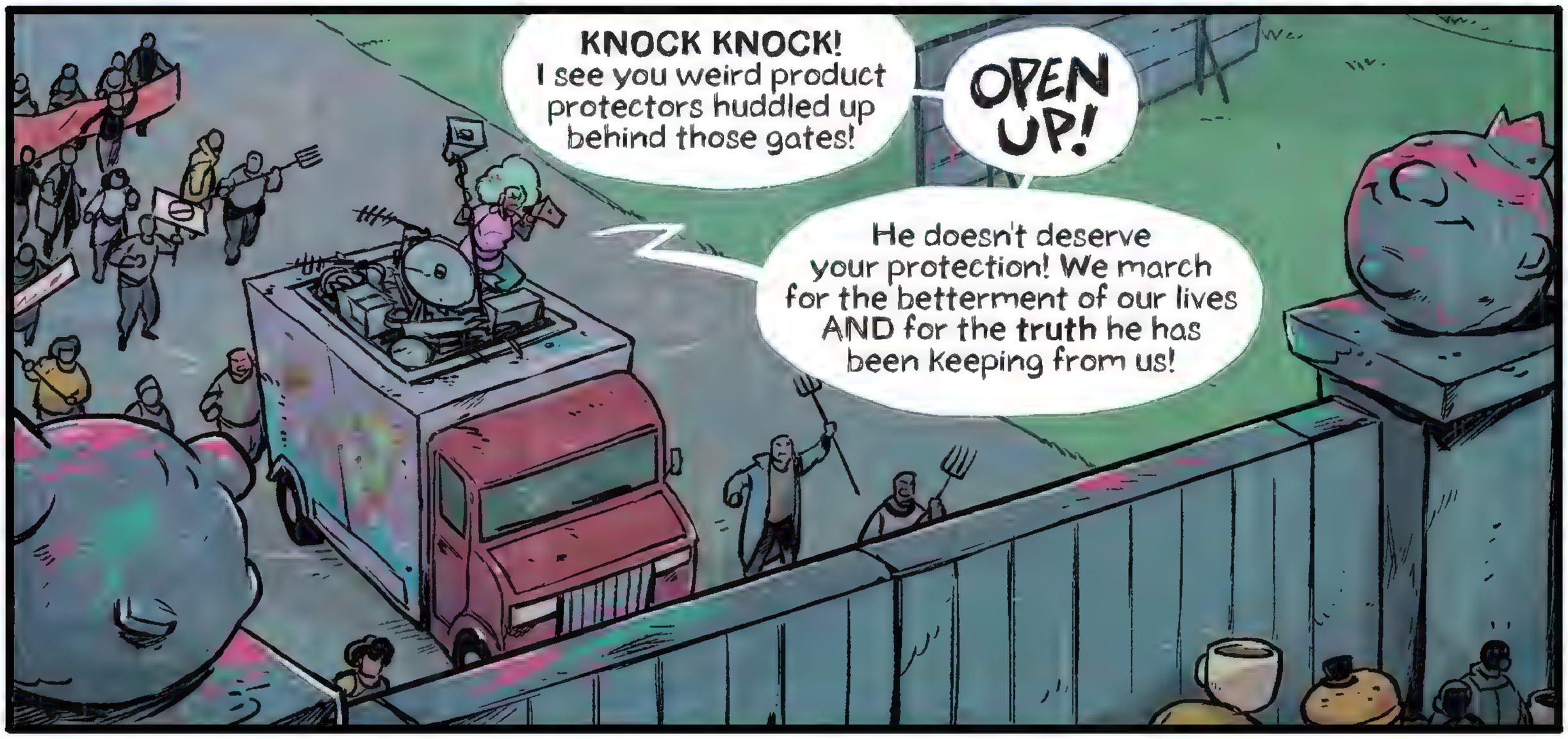
He's her **JAILER!**

What's going on?

We're marching! Give me a hand!

Zawa has retreated into the Mountain. I think she's scared, but we need to **HELP** her!


DON'T LET THEM IN!!!
We'll try?
What was that about Zawa?


KNOCK KNOCK! I see you weird product protectors huddled up behind those gates!
OPEN UP!
He doesn't deserve your protection! We march for the betterment of our lives AND for the truth he has been keeping from us!

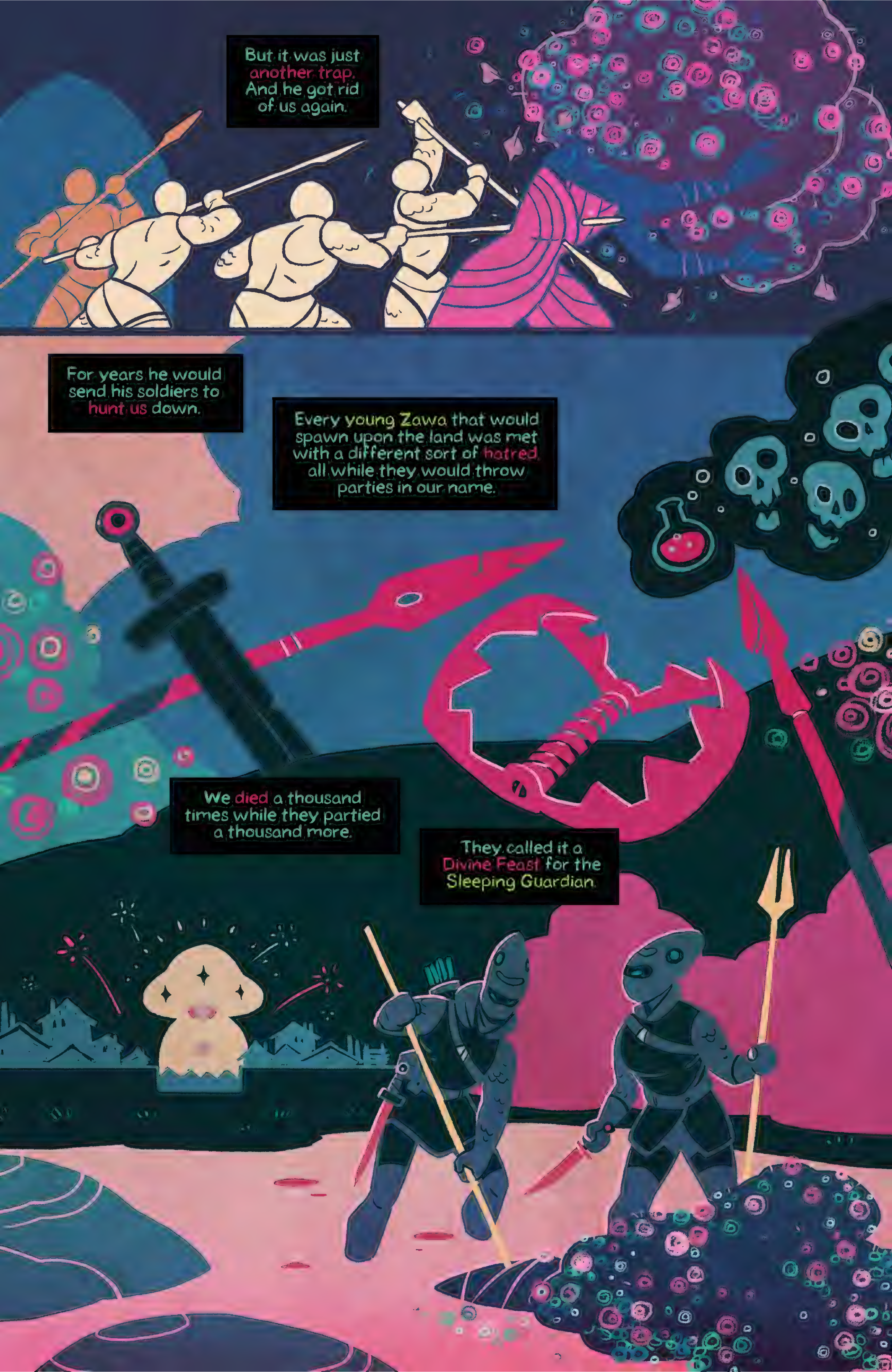
We are all citizens of MESA'S BOON here and we march on your behalf too!

Deploying anti-protest sprays.

Oh no you don't, mister!

Open sesame rolls!

Years had passed, and the Mountain gave birth to a new Zawa.
Confused and naive once more.
Their people rejoiced at the sight of us, but their King did not.
He convinced us it was just an accident and that he took great care of the Mountain in our absence.


But it was just another trap. And he got rid of us again.
For years he would send his soldiers to hunt us down.
Every young Zawa that would spawn upon the land was met with a different sort of hatred, all while they would throw parties in our name.
We died a thousand times while they partied a thousand more.
They called it a Divine Feast for the Sleeping Guardian.

How dare they desecrate our name like that?
We NEVER slept.
We only got ANGRIER.
No more HUNTING.
No more DYING.
For WE ARE...

ZAWA
LAST
Guardian
of THE
MOUNTAIN.

We know what you did, MAYOR!

We know about **ZAWA!**

Well. I don't recall having a town meeting on the books today.

No no. My family had just been at **war** with Zawa over the fate of the Mountain. **Exterminating** that monster every time it showed up. We would have **never** expanded into the wonderful city we are today otherwise.

The problem was, every time it emerged, it was even angrier than before. Do you know **how hard** it was to keep this conflict a secret? The fight only stopped when my father had the idea to **detach** its **damn head** and lock it up.

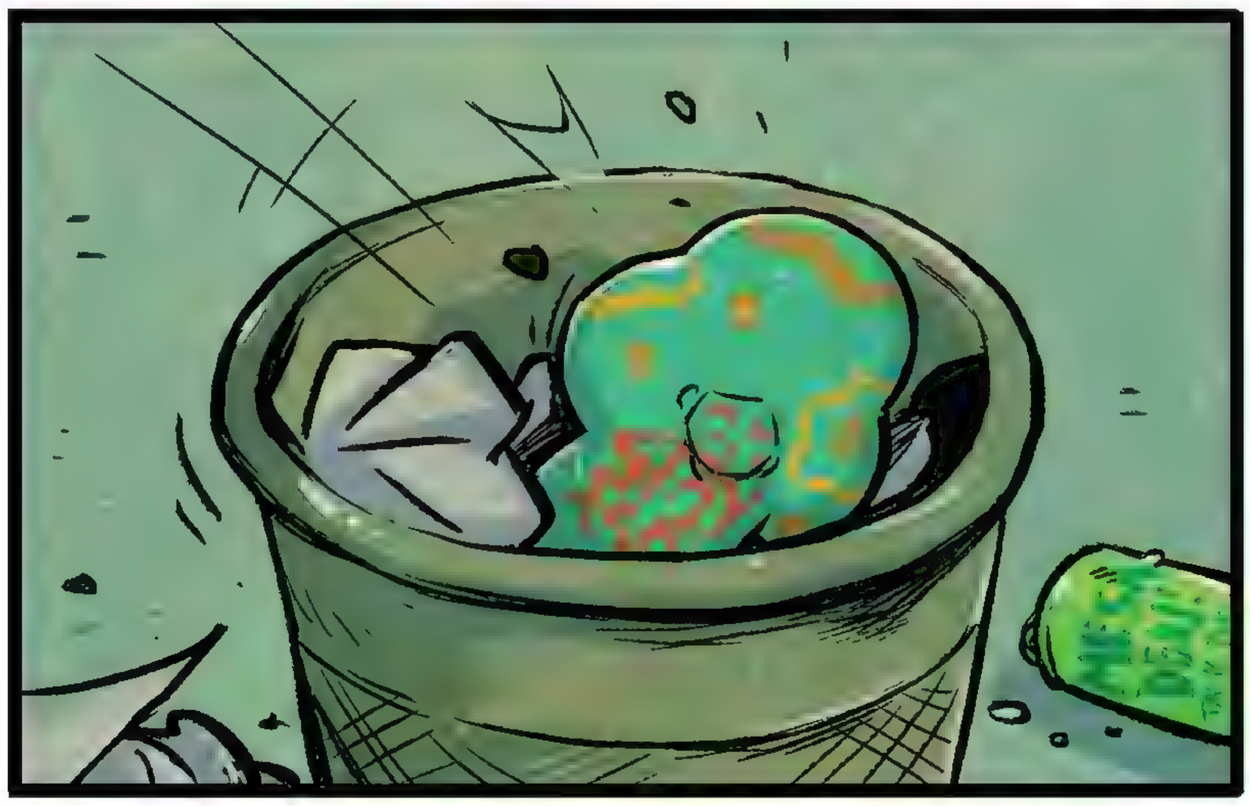
A **genius plan** that worked!

The next Zawa that appeared was like a **docile kitty** compared to before.

I witnessed my father lure it in with delicious treats, and the war was over.

STAY AWAY!

You see, **my** little innovation was to move it to the basement and give it the impossible task of cleaning up the factory's waste.



I **gave** it what it really wanted. A chance to clean up our mess.

Making Zawa the factory's JANITOR put an end to the endless war it had waged on us.

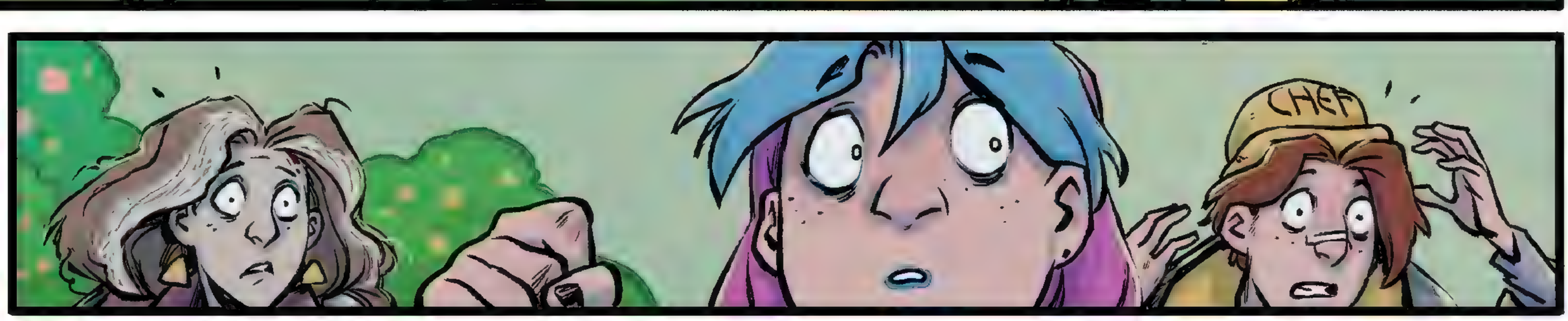
And Dad? He wanted to free her.

Yeah, we couldn't allow **that thing** to reconnect with the Mountain.

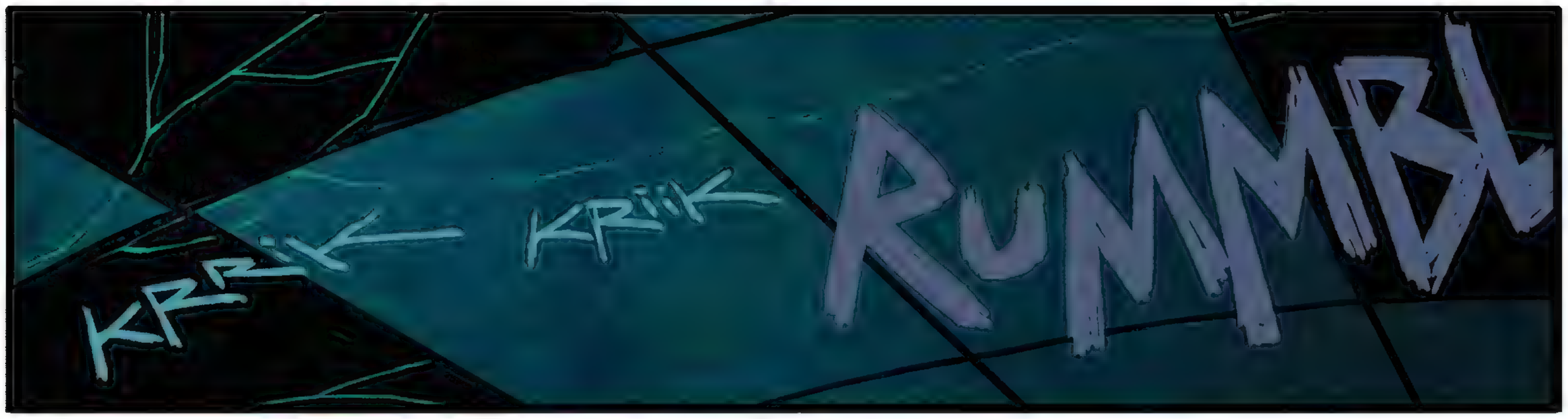
Getting your dad *out of the way* was ultimately for **the greater good!**

Your mother wouldn't have helped me so diligently if she didn't think Zawa killed h--

THOK!


CHEF

Thatcher, I'm sorry, I was unaware.
I always liked your dad. The way he made rice puddings really **rocked**.


KRRIK
KRIIK
RUMMBL

No wonder Zawa ran away.
People have been terrible to her.

We need to get out of here and find her! Her pain and anger must be affecting the island!

MUM! C'mon.
Leave him!

If only we knew earlier how rotten our Mayor really was, maybe we could have prevented...

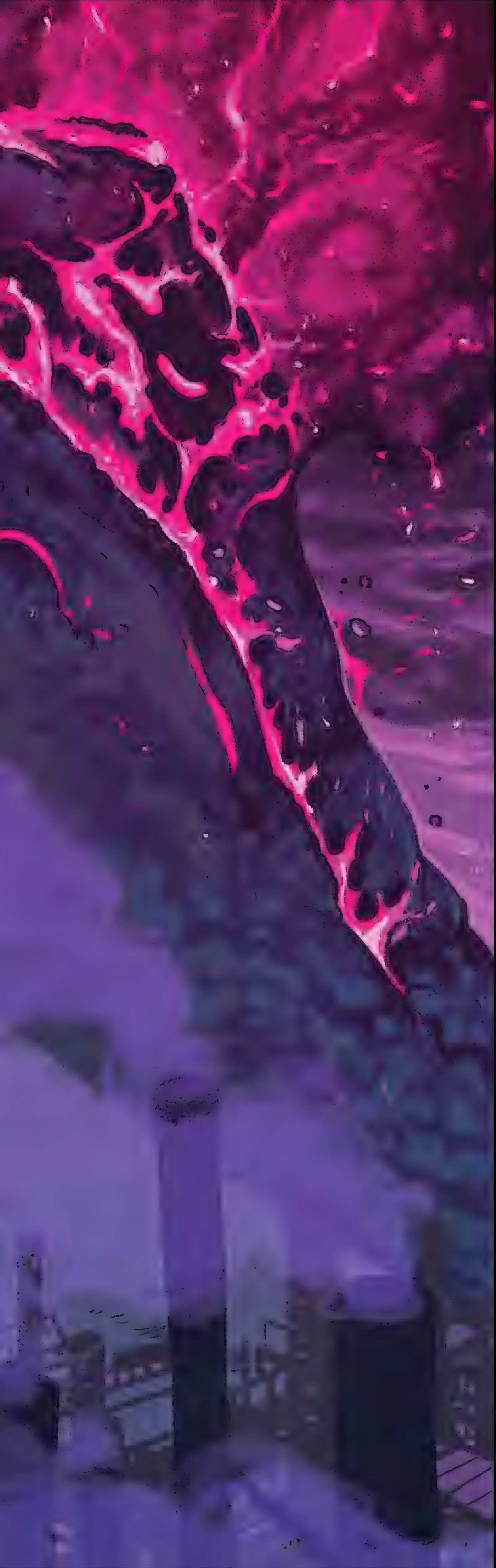
RUMMMMBLE!
... the TRUE awakening of the Sleeping Guardian.
WAKE THE GUARDIAN

BRING THEM
DOOOOM!

STAY CLOSE, MUM!

We emerged from the Mayor's storage silo...

CHEF
...only to witness the destruction of our home.
Zawa?



Kids, we gotta go.

We need to get to the boats.

Let's use the BUR-GUR trucks!

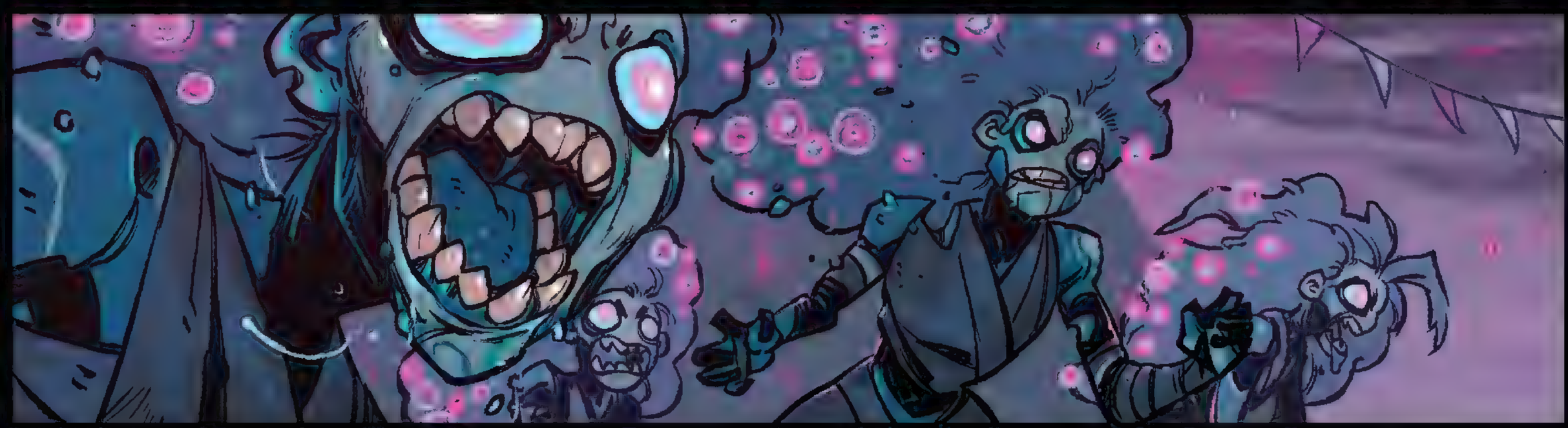
Desolation. DESTRUCTION.

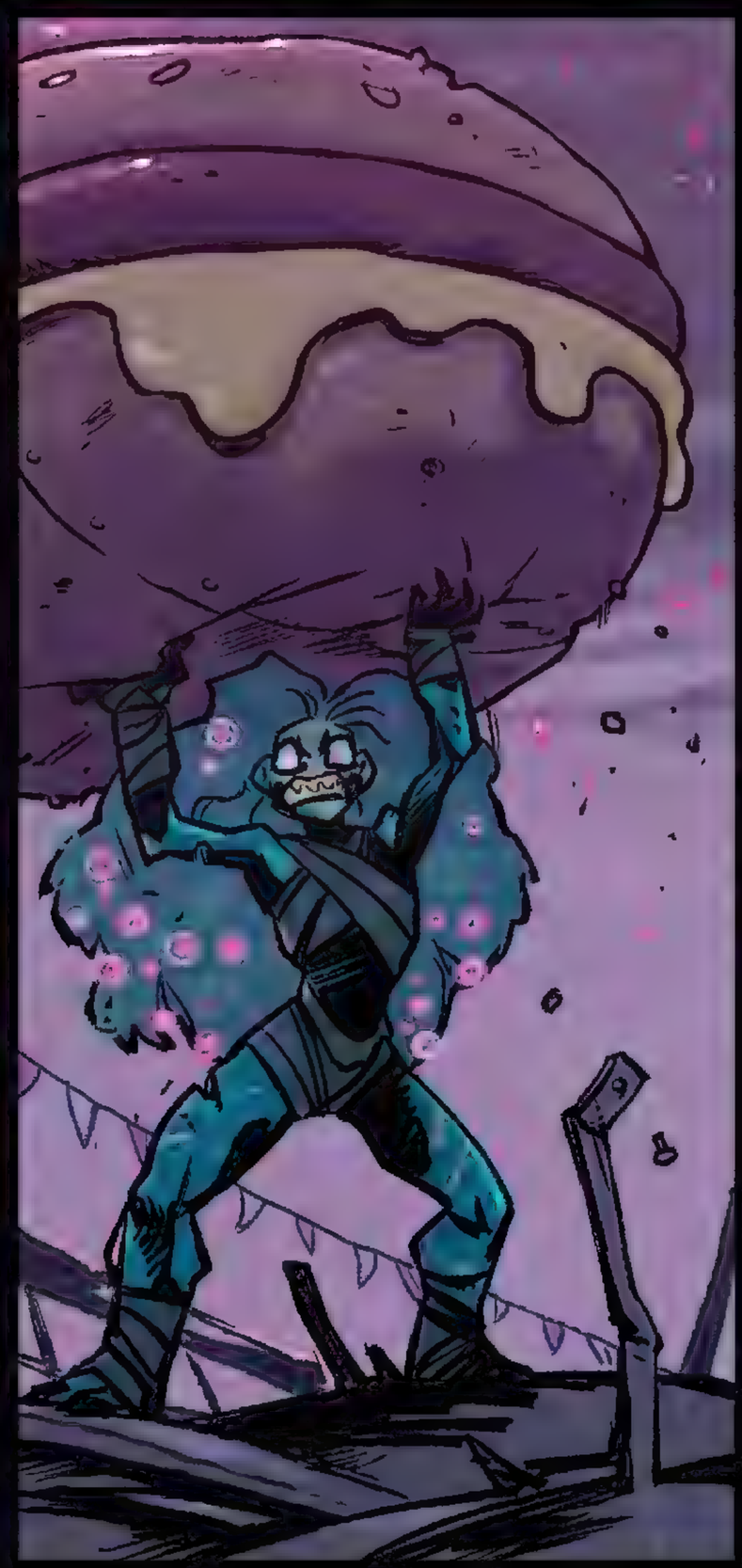
DOOPM

I couldn't understand why this was happening, but I knew Zawa was in pain.

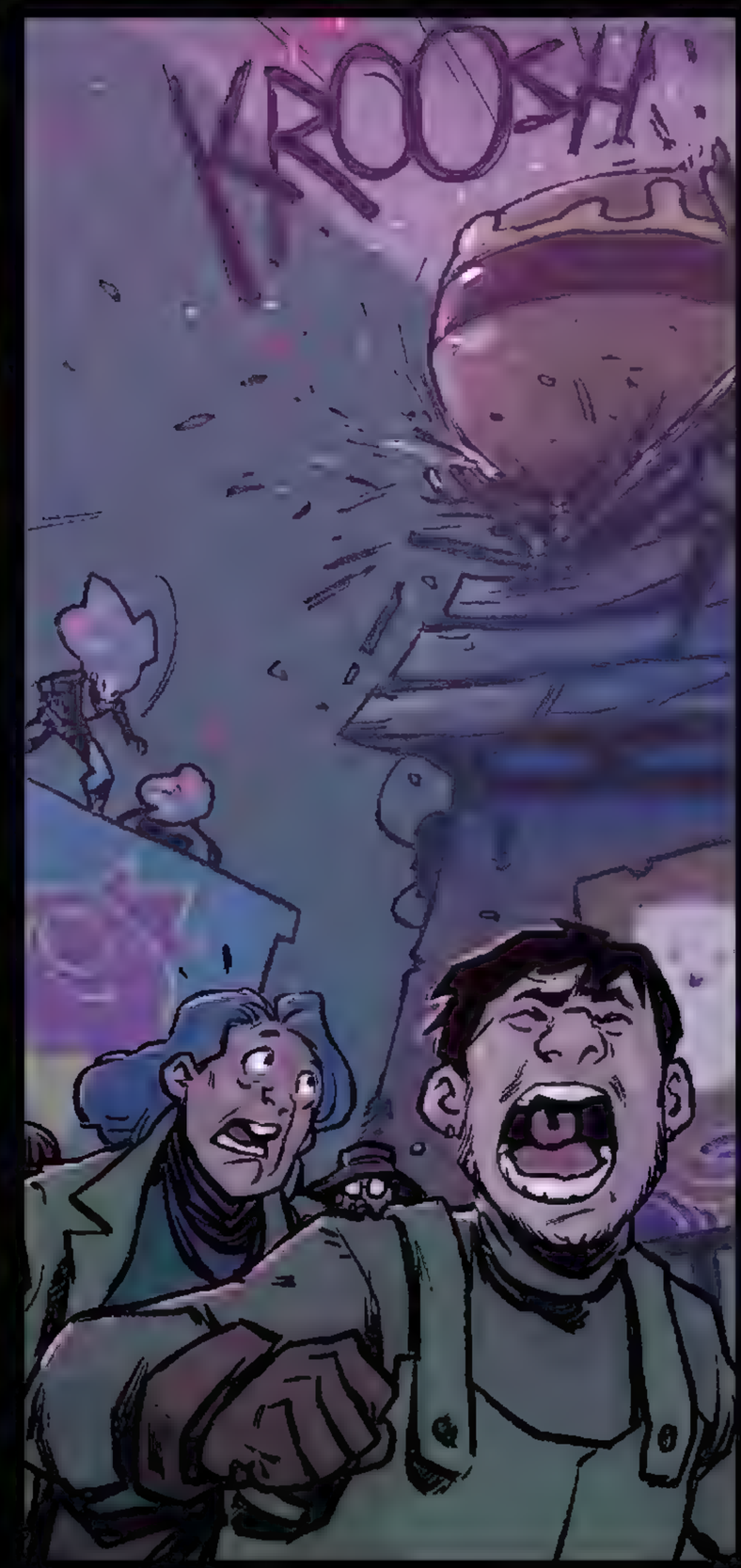
THEY MUST PAY!

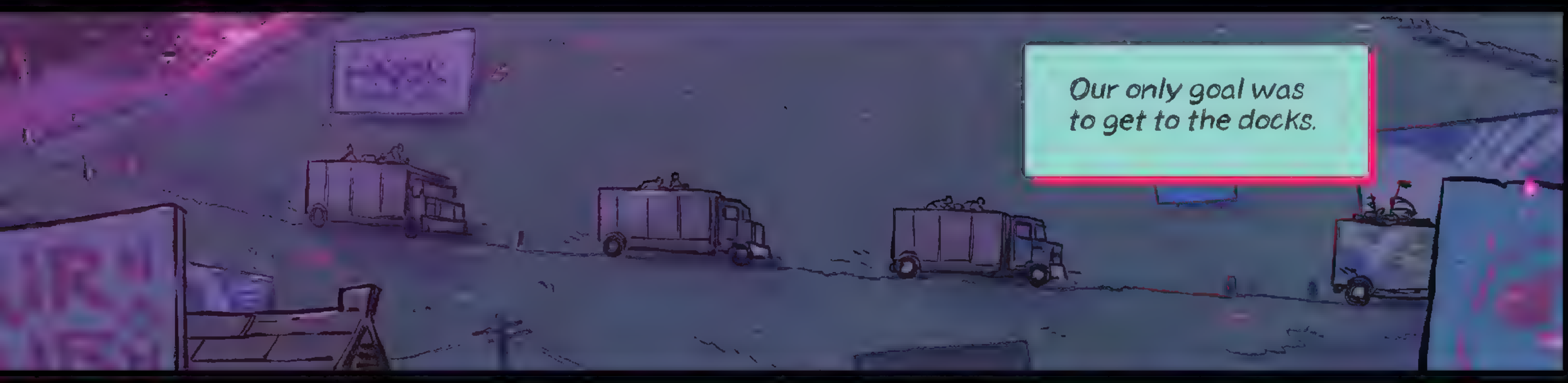
TOFT
WORK HARD

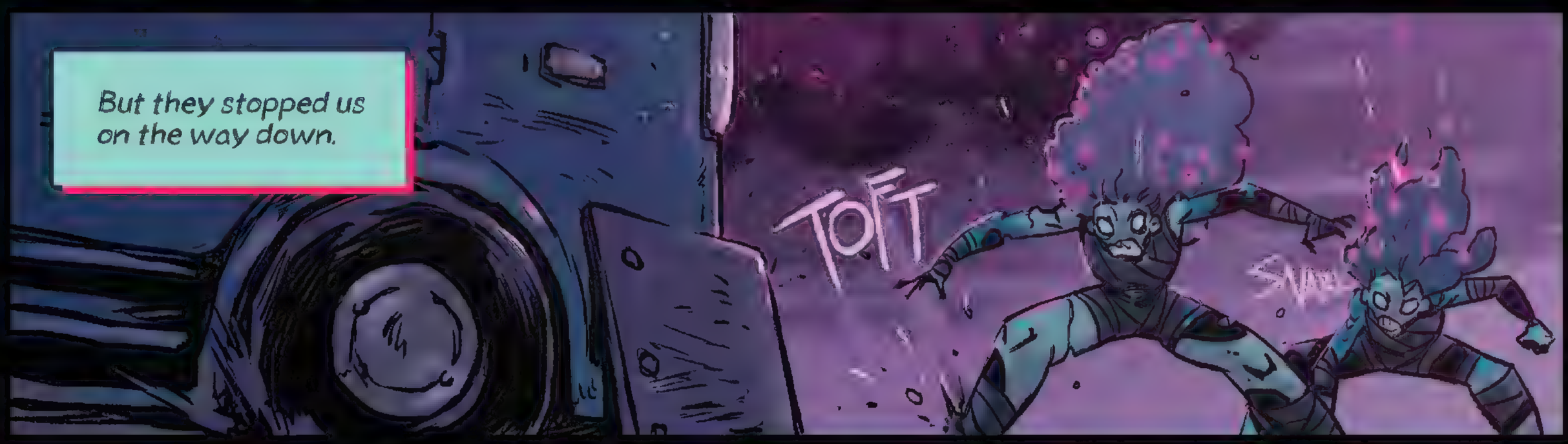




Our city was suddenly flooded with monsters that looked like Zawa, destroying everything in sight.


VROOSH


Our only goal was to get to the docks.


But they stopped us on the way down.
TOFT

Oh NO! What do I do?!

HOLD ON!

I had an idea.
DESOLATION.
DESTRUCTION.

Coo-Kie?

MMM!

They weren't monsters.

FTUP!

They were ZAWA!

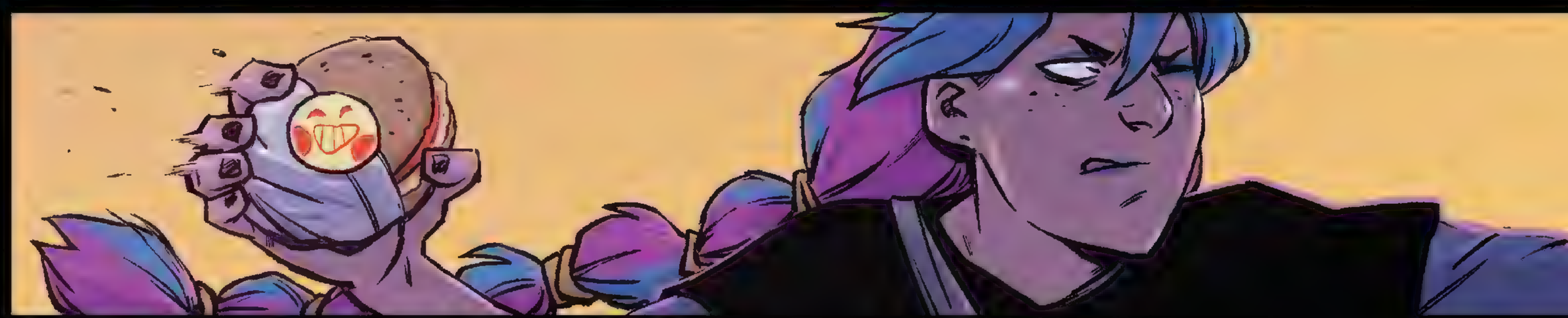
It's ZAWA!
Leo, I think I know how to stop this!

What do you mean?
We gotta feed them and show them that we care.
It's just like when we first met.

We put my plan into motion by gathering the **persimmons** from the bounty tree...

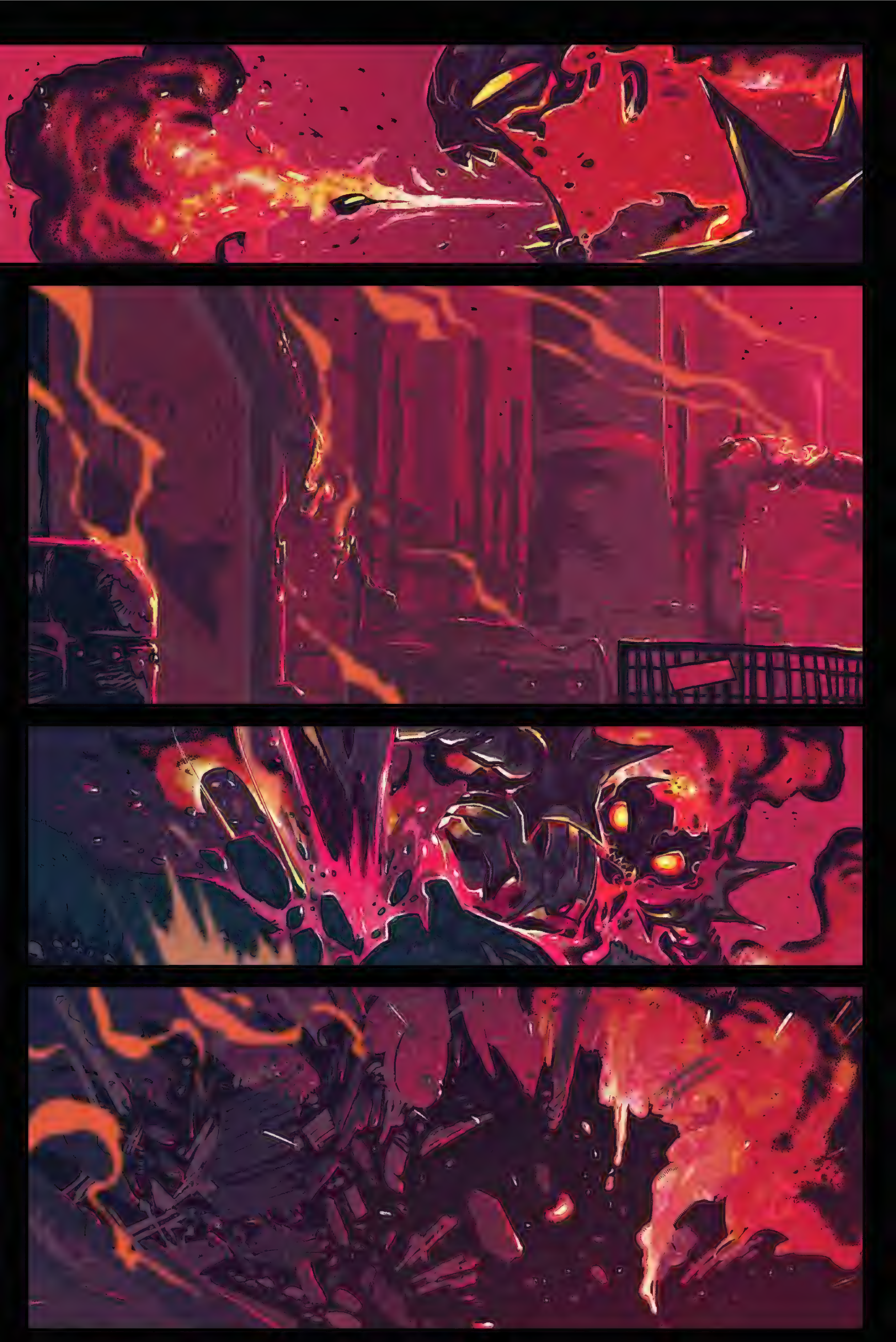
...and repurposed **the buns** and **condiments** from the Mayor's food truck while **Leo's yaya** sent a message out for everyone in the city to start evacuating the island as soon as possible.

We divided into groups to find the rampaging Zawa and stop the chaos.



FOOD FIGHT!
THATCHER?
I made this.
Wake up, Zawa!
Help get everyone to the boats!
CHEF
I'm not sure if my plan really helped, but something terrible happened after.
BANDIT?
MY FRIENDS?
They are PESTS!
THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT OUR MOUNTAIN.
NO! you're WRONG!
IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE.
WE WILL FLUSH THEM OUT...
SNAP

AND BRING FINAL DESOLATION!
It was truly out of our hands now.
The Mountain's wrath was upon us.
NEW STUFFED TOMATOES
OUR MAYOR PROVIDES!



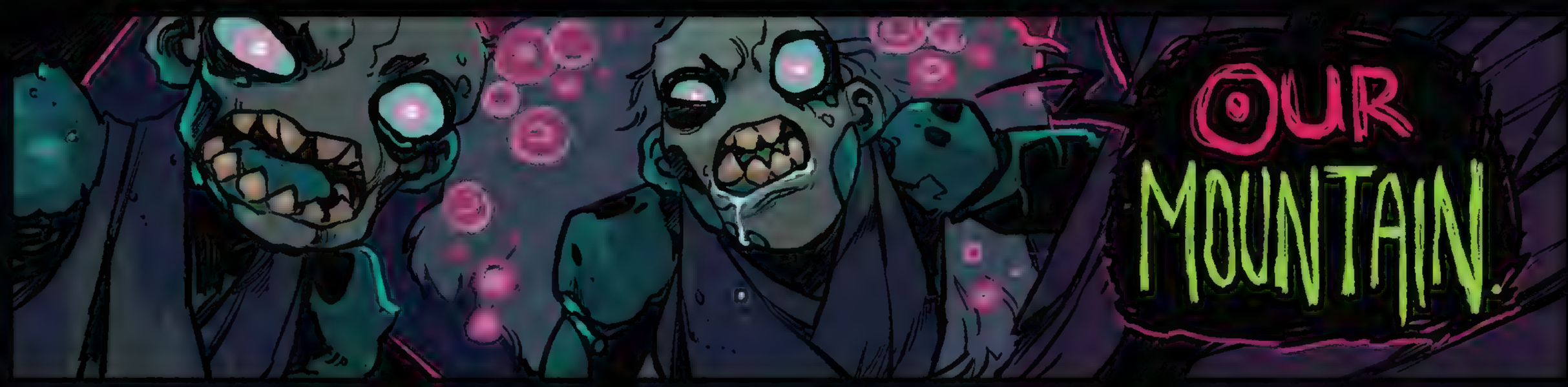
WAKE THE GUARD
One by one, every boat and ship filled up with citizens of Mesa's Boon.
Clutching whatever they held near and dear to get off the island.
Our home was doomed.

Please.
stop.

You OK?!
L-looks like a kid.

Get away...
It's NOT safe.

It's one of those things!
Gobble-geist!

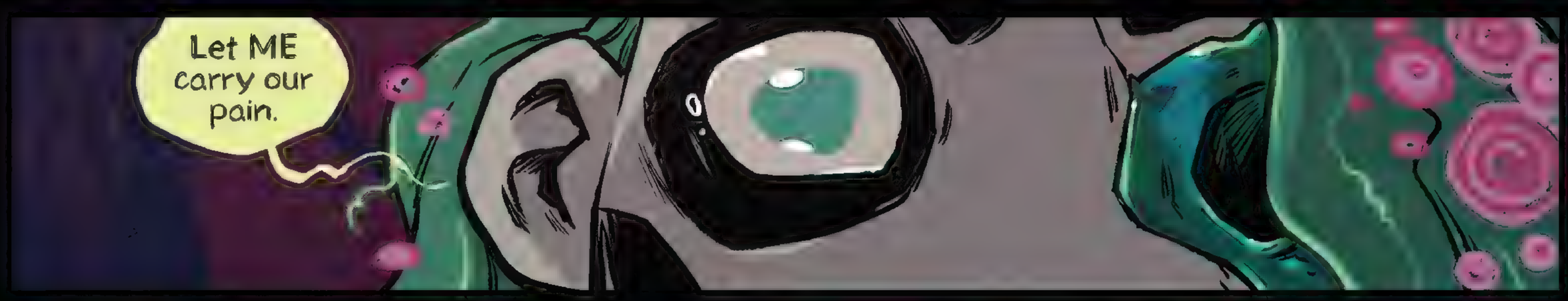

OUR MOUNTAIN.

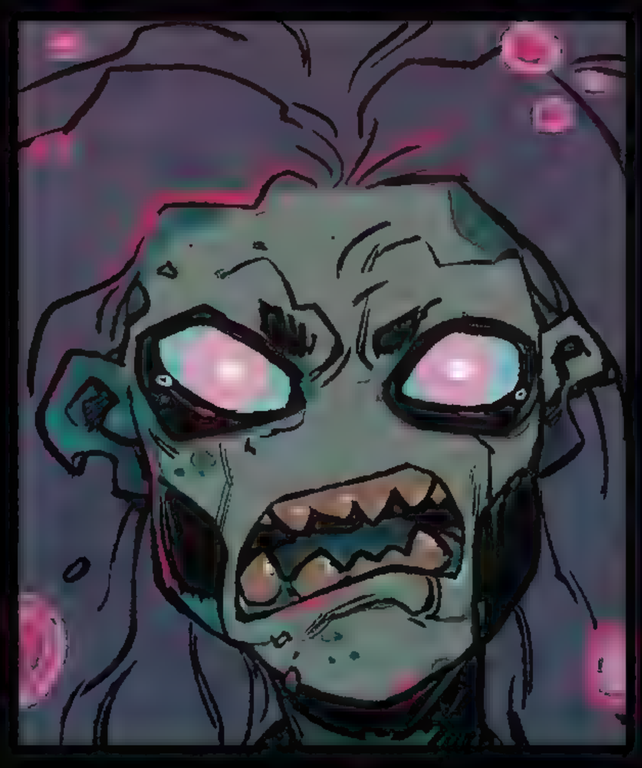
LEAVE!

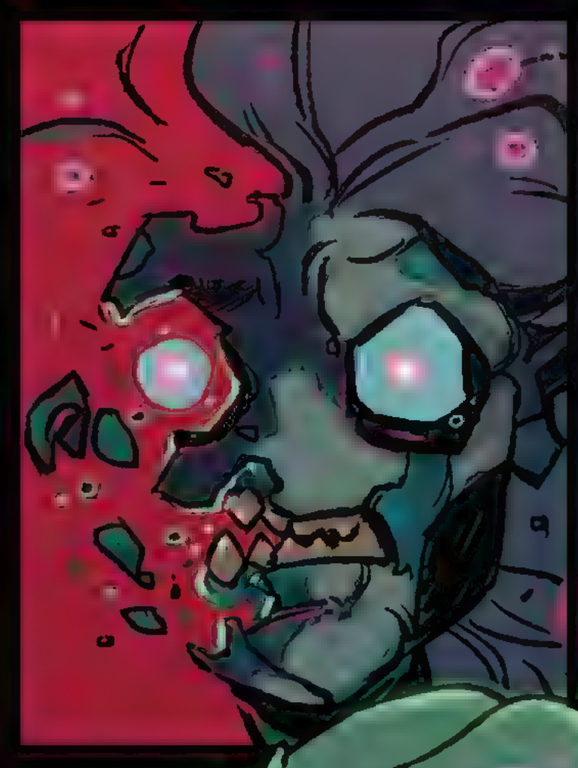
STOP!
LEAVE THEM ALONE!

You don't understand. I have friends.
Bandit. Thatcher. Leo. Belle & Spot. They were kind to me.

I understand your anger. But this is NOT the way to solve it.


Let ME carry our pain.



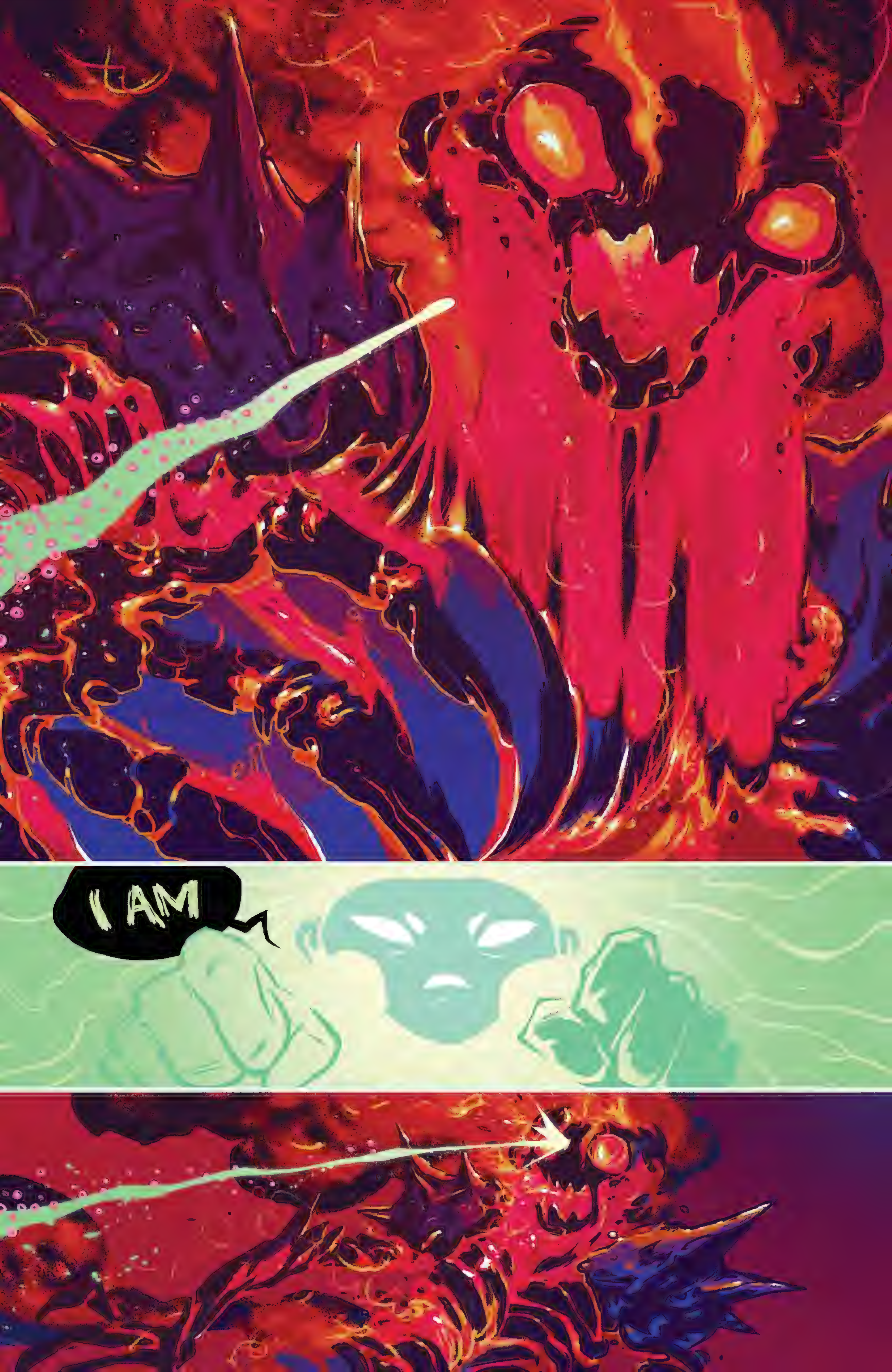


THEY HUNTED US DOWN.
THEY'RE DESTROYING OUR BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAIN!

BUT SO ARE WE, ZAWA!

We cannot punish them all for the faults of a few.

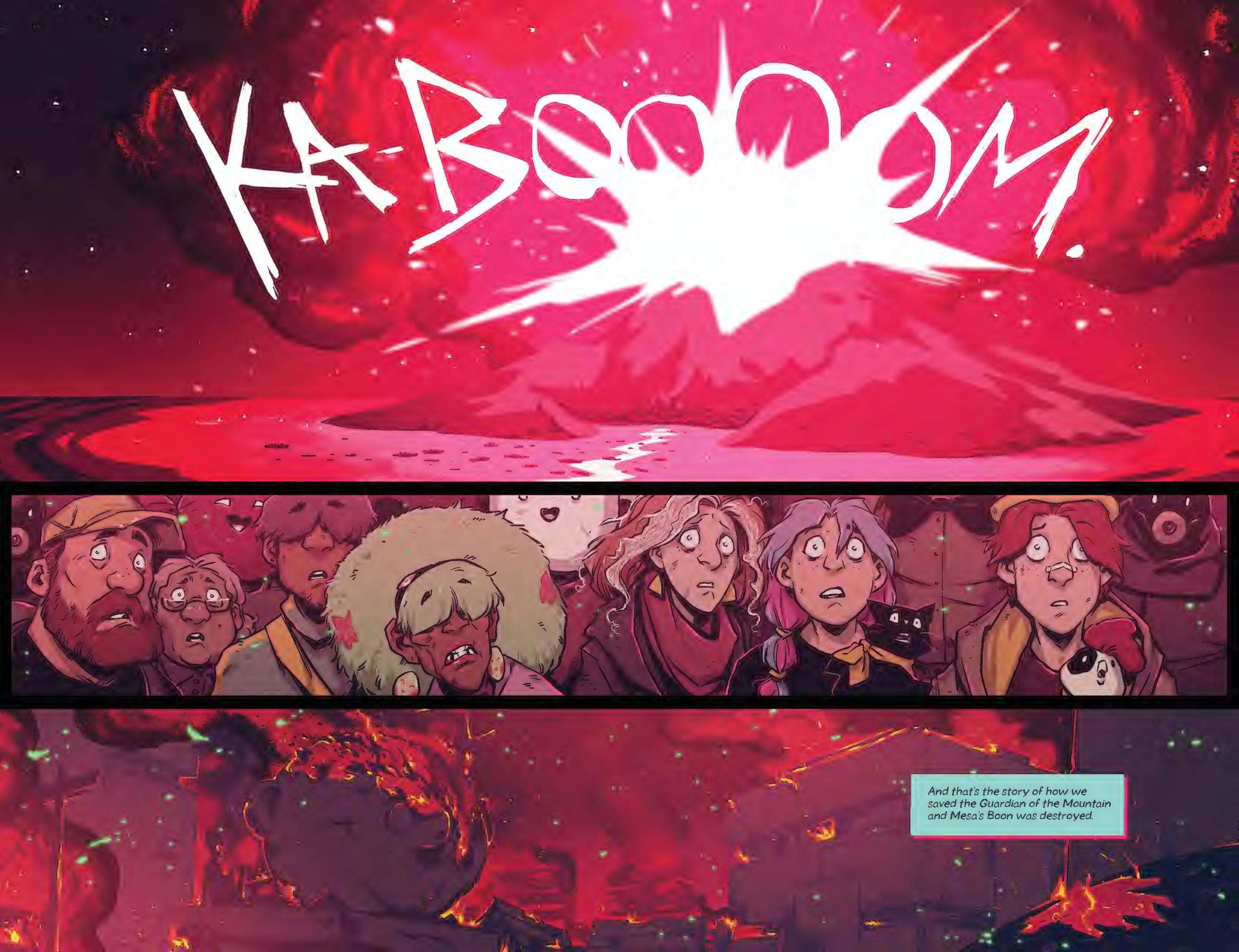
I AM THE GUARDIAN HERE.


I AM

ZAWA!

NO ONE DESERVES ALL THIS PAIN!

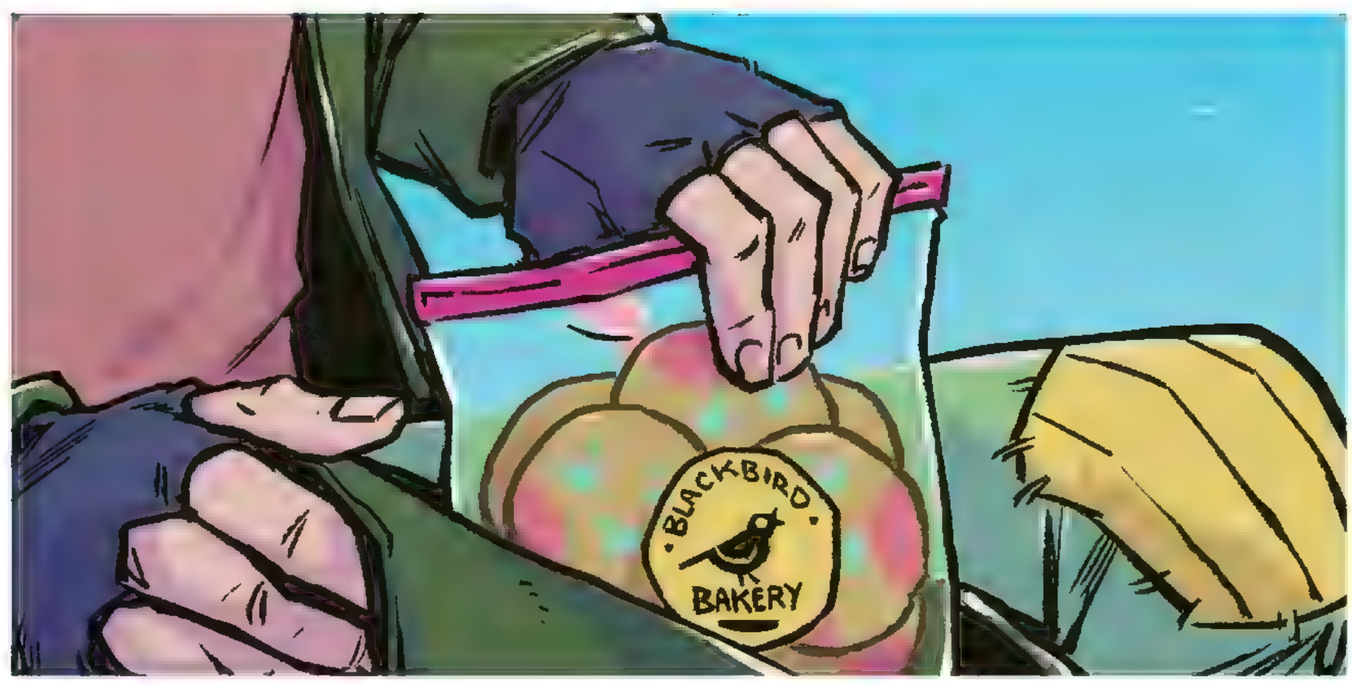
ALL OF US ARE THE MOUNTAIN.
SO
PLEASE.
STOP!


KA-BOOOM!
And that's the story of how we saved the Guardian of the Mountain and Mesa's Boon was destroyed.

MANY YEARS LATER.
We haven't seen Zawa ever since.
She saved all of us back then, but everyone else was too scared to realize it. The damage was too great, and no one felt safe being here.
We all scattered to different corners of the world and started new lives.

But I still believe in Zawa, and we make the trip over every year in hopes of seeing her again.
HEFO

Now. Who wants a cookie?


BLACKBIRD BAKERY

Me!
ME!

YO BANDIT!

Hope my twerp's behaving. Finish up, or we're gonna be late for the new store opening, ok?

Thatch? Hold on a sec.

I was hoping that one day I might see you again!

Were you listening to our story?
'Cause I wish to ask you something, if that's ok.
HEF!

I'd imagine that you wouldn't want anything to do with humankind ever again, and you have every right to feel that way.
But I believe that with the right people in charge, there could be a future where we can all be happy and safe.
What d'ya say? Will you allow us to stay again?
OH GREAT ZAWA, HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN.
NOM NOM
THE END!

The Black Bird Bakery Recipe Book!

CHEF NOTES!

DIVINE FEAST IDEA

Sleeping Guardian Cookies

THIS WOULD BE A GREAT TREAT TO CELEBRATE OUR GUARDIAN ZAWA.

* MY KIDS WOULD LOVE THESE TOO!

I THINK GINGER COOKIES WOULD BE GOOD FOR THESE.

✧ nice + ✧ WARM!

THEY'LL NEED:

FLOUR, GINGER, BAKING SODA
CINNAMON, CLOVES, SALT
BUTTER, BROWN SUGAR
+ MOLASSES.

PROPOSED "BUR-GUR"
FOR THE MAYOR'S MACHINES

- HANDPICK THE INGREDIENTS.

- TOASTED Sesame BUN-TOP
- MAYONNAISE
- SEARED TOMATO
- GRILLED "BUR-GUR" OR SQUASH ?
- LETTUCE LEAF
- HONEY MUSTARD
- TOASTED BUN-BOTTOM

SERVED WITH LOVE!

Well, I hope we can.

THE GUARDIAN HAS AWAKENED!

DAD WOULD HAVE MADE SOMETHING HEARTY + EGGY + CUTE FOR HER!

I've got this!

EGGS FROM SPOT!

MIX WITH MOO MOO MILK THEN WHISK!

CUT UP A RED POTATO + KING MUSHROOMS + FRESH SPRING ONIONS!

FRY ALL THESE FIRST!

POUR OVER THE FRIED MUSHROOMS, ONIONS + RED POTATOES

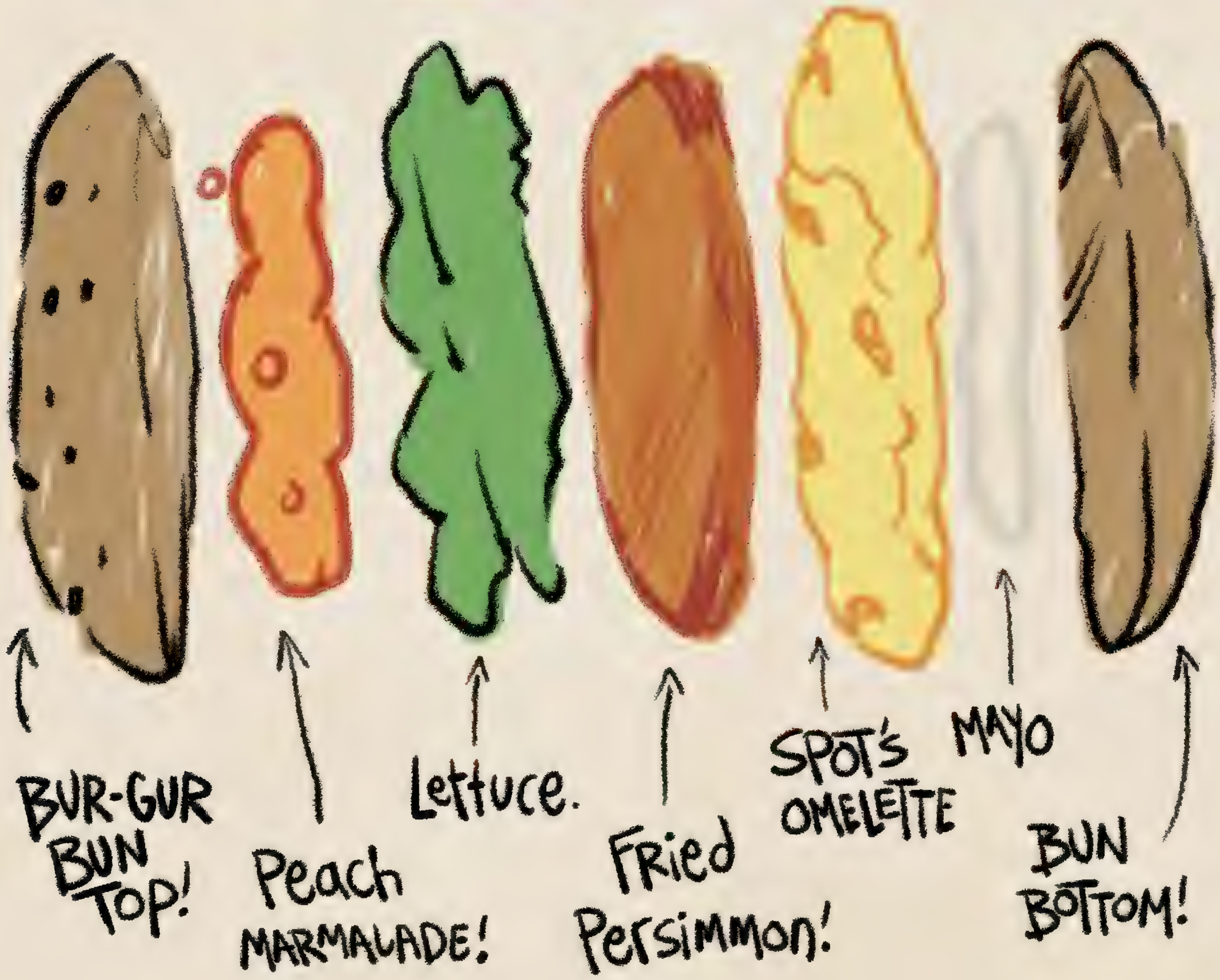
Serve WITH LOVE! + A LITTLE ZAWA FACE

I HOPE ZAWA REALLY LIKES THIS!

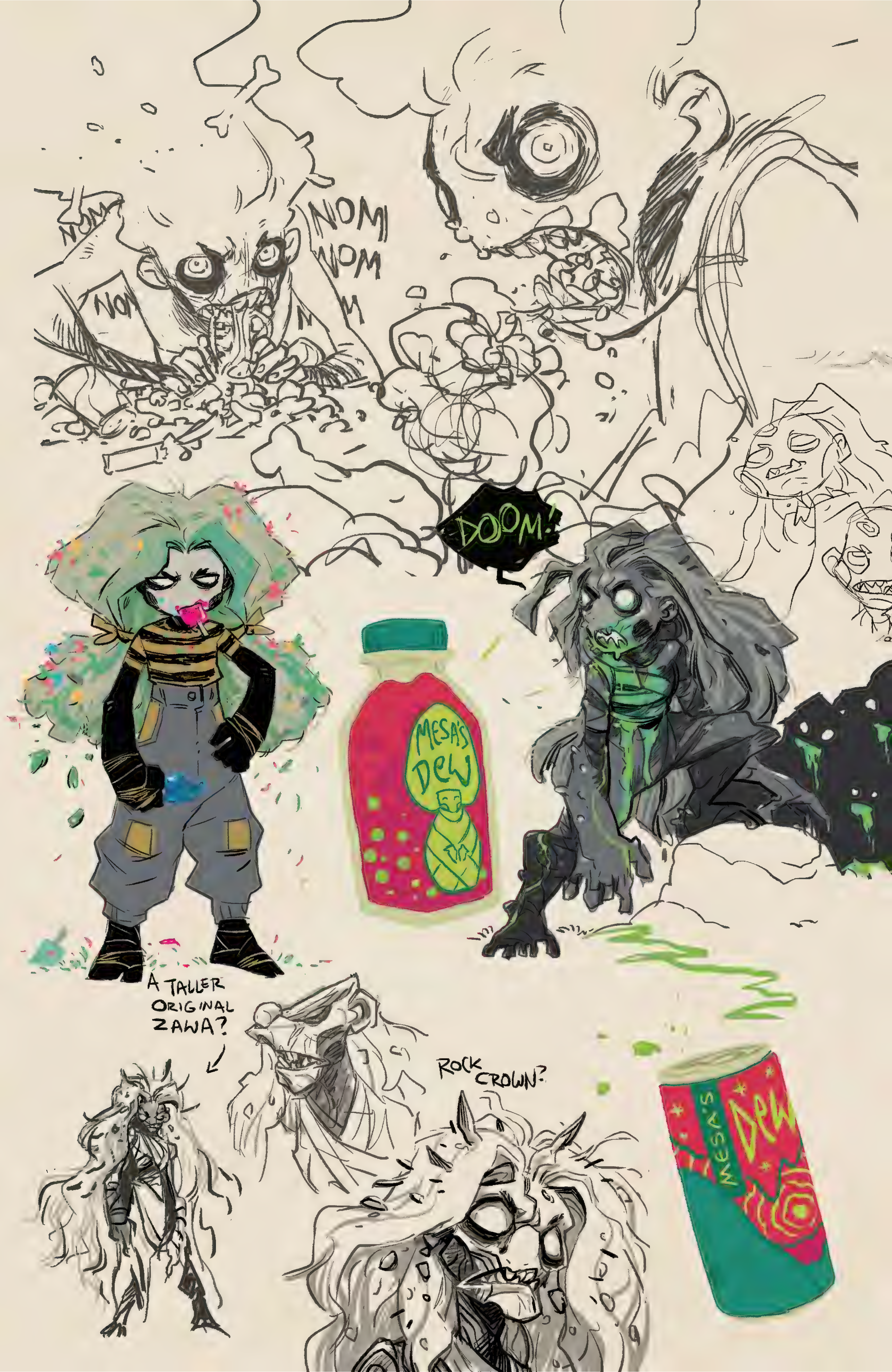
*SHE DID!

OUR GRANDMOTHER DIPPED FETA CHEESE + RUSKS INTO STRONGLY BREWED COFFEE. WHAT IF I SWAPPED IT WITH HOT COCOA?!?!

I THINK WE CAN SOOTHE THE ZAWA WITH A "GOOD EGG BURGUR BOMB"



EARLY DESIGNS + CONCEPTS


NOM
NOM
NOM
NOM
DOOM!
MESA'S DEW
A TALLER ORIGINAL ZAWA?
ROCK CROWN?
MESA'S DEW

BANDIT BLACKBIRD

HE WANTS TO COOK!

YELLOW STRIPES ARE PART OF BLACKBIRD BAKERY'S BRAND.

ZAWA!

THE DEITY + MOUNTAIN GUARDIAN

A HANGRY BEAST!

FLOWERS + GRASS GROW!

THATCH GIVES HER OLD BAKERY CLOTHES

THATCHER BLACKBIRD

SHE ALSO WEAR THE YELLOW-STRIPED BAKERY PANTS.

CHEWS ON STRAWS

BUR GUR

BASIC DESIGN

L!

IMPRISONED ZAWA ISSUE #1

* TRASH DIRTY IS THE LOOK

COOKIES!

THE ZAWA PITCH COVER!

THE BELLY OF THE BEAST!

SERIES COVERS BY
MICHAEL DIALYNAS

BUR
GUR

WANTED
DANGEROUS MONSTER!!!
EAT BUR GUR !!!
READ COMICS

HELP US!

MICHAEL DIALYNAS is an **Eisner**-nominated and **GLAAD** Media Award-winning comic artist and mini-beast wrangler that resides in Athens, Greece.

He is the illustrator and co-creator of **WYND** and **THE WOODS** with James Tynion IV. Over the past few years he's been one of the main artists involved with **IDW**'s **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES** series, all the way up to the milestone issue 100.

WoodenCrown.com

SON OF ULTRON